Research Article

Gender Stereotypes in Advertising: Shaping Audience Perceptions and Social Norms

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About Article

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ABSTRACT

Gender stereotype refers to socially shared beliefs about behaviours and roles considered appropriate for men and women. Gender stereotypes in advertising have been a continuing problem in the media world, influencing the perception of the audience and the society around the proper roles of men and women. The study "Gender Stereotypes in Advertising: Shaping Audience Perceptions and Social Norms" investigates the manner of depicting men and women in Nigeria's commercials, the effect of these depictions on the audience's perception, and the social implications of advertising based on stereotypes in a larger context. Besides, it also analyses the power of advertisements via the non-stereotypical route to prevail over customary gender norms. A desktop research (secondary research) method is utilised in the study which relies on a comprehensive examination of scholarly literature, and reports. Analyses from the literature show that men are mostly presented as powerful, self-sufficient, and making-their-own-decisions while women are having the roles of being at home, beautiful, or helping. Such images affect the audience's views, making the existing gender bias and the public's expectations about gender roles stronger. On the contrary, new anti-stereotypical advertisements, which are culturally honest and contextually pertinent, claim to be the contributors to changing the perception of gender roles to be more equal. The research draws attention to the immense power of media in determining the gender roles and proposes the tactics of counter-stereotypical advertising promotion, media literacy reinforcement, regulatory frameworks implementation, and diversity encouragement in creative teams as the means of tackling the issue of stereotypical portrayals. By doing so, the research also helps to uncover the dynamics of how advertising can be a source or a battleground of traditional gender roles in Nigeria.

1.0 INTRODUCTION

Advertising is not just a means of promoting products and services, but it is also a strong cultural and social instrument that aids in the formation of societal values, identities, and norms. Audiences are subjected to the same gender role portrayals that reflect and reinforce cultural expectations through the images, stories, and messages in advertisements. Generally, men's characters are assertive, dominant, decision-makers, or breadwinners, whereas women's are nurturing, appearance-focused, passive, or limited to home roles (Ezeah & Ifebunandu, 2025). These portrayals are not without consequences; they are social constructions and still promote specific thoughts and attitudes regarding behaviours, roles, and traits that are suitable for each gender.

The analysis reveals that advertising with stereotypical representations of gender can greatly lead to psychological and social issues. Women's exposure to traditional gender roles in advertisements, for instance, has been linked to the development of body dissatisfaction, self-objectification, and the internalisation of restrictive beauty standards (Dai, Zhu, & Guo, 2025). Moreover, these representations have a strong influence on the public perception regarding gender roles, which are the division of jobs and areas in society by gender. This effect on men is equally important; for example, the illustrated masculinity in the advertisements showing such qualities as big muscles, being bossy, and being emotionally neutral can create unrealistic expectations, body-image concerns, and limitations on men's emotional expressions (Tokmak, 2017; Ezeaka, *et.al,* 2025).

Through the constantly changing and repeating of the messages that carry certain symbols, advertising slowly but surely becomes the main vehicle through which the audience gets socialised. The messages not only control an individual's perception of identity but also set up and modify the social norms such as power, authority, and relationships between the genders (Bandura, 2001). In a country like Nigeria, where old-fashioned and male-dominant values still have a say, gendered advertising keeps social hierarchies that are already established in place by featuring women mostly in the roles of housewives, subordinates, or ornaments while presenting men as leaders, decision-makers, and breadwinners (Ade Johnson, 2024). This

might not only lead to the creation of certain stereotypes regarding women but also the reinforcement of gender discrimination.

Increasingly more marketing campaigns are showing women's empowerment, and men's roles in households and caring for children are changing. People still very much see the stereotypes in different media channels and, thus, such portrayals remain strong. Research indicates that stereotypical advertising can significantly spread more tolerant attitudes towards the issue, fight against the traditional gender norms, and give rise to more inclusive societies (Dai *et al.*, 2025; Ezeaka & Bartholomew, 2025). The acceptance of these modern ways of portraying men and women in advertisements, however, is still quite limited, especially in places where the globalisation of media and the traditional cultural values are in conflict with each other.

Considering the widespread nature of gender stereotypes in advertisements and their ability to influence the creation of social norms, it becomes indispensable to scrutinize these representations along with their impact on the public's perception. Grasping the ways in which advertisements express gendered messages and how the public either accepts or rejects them opens a window into both the establishment and modification of social norms. This research is particularly significant in the context of a media environment that is constantly changing, where people are getting exposed to various advertising messages through different channels such as TV, print, and digital media (Ezeah & Ifebunandu, 2025).

Under such a viewpoint, this research puts its emphasis on the impact of gender-based stereotypes in advertising on the shaping of audience perceptions and on the formation of social norms. It is a critical and analytical inquiry into the portrayals of men and women in advertisements and the assessment of the impact on both personal attitudes and societal expectations related to gender roles.

1.1 Statement of the Problem

Although advertising has become more visible and powerful than ever, it still has a major role in society and the media along with gender stereotypes. In media often men are distributed as confident,

dominant, and assertive characters while women are singled out as nurturing, passive, and mainly concerned with their looks (Ezeah & Ifebunandu, 2025). These representations do not only mirror the prevailing attitudes of the society but also lead to the audience's gender role determination and the social expectation that men and women "must" behave the way these roles are portrayed. Research has shown that constant viewing of such stereotypical advertisements is likely to result in negative psychological effects like dissatisfaction with the body, lowered self-esteem, and acceptance of narrow gender views (Dai, Zhu, & Guo, 2025). Further, such representations result in a division of roles in society and the workplace which limits the scope of women being seen as capable in the areas of professional and leadership and brings about the situation where men are associated with power and decision-making roles (Tokmak, 2017).

These dynamics are especially significant in the Nigerian context. Evidence from research shows that the advertising sector in Nigeria continues to paint women mainly in the roles of housewives or ornaments while men are given the roles of public, professional, and decision makers (Ade Johnson, 2024; Ezeah & Ifebunandu, 2025). The positive and the negative influence of such portrayals on the audience's attitudes, and the reinforcement of the patriarchal social norms have the potential to limit both men and women in their personal and professional aspirations. There has been worldwide advocacy for counter-stereotypical advertising and more balanced gender portrayals but the number of studies investigating the internalisation or resistance of Nigerian audiences to these stereotypes is still small. Moreover, there is a lack of understanding regarding the broader social consequences of these portrayals in shaping societal norms around gender roles. Thus, the present study intends to provide a critical analysis of the gender stereotypes in advertising, their effects on the audience's perceptions and norms, and the socio-cultural context of Nigeria.

2.0 OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY
The following objectives guided the study:

1. To explore the portrayal of men and women in Nigerian advertisements.
2. To analyse the influence of gendered advertising on audience perceptions of appropriate gender roles.
3. To explore the potential of counter-stereotypical advertising in challenging traditional gender norms.

2.1 Significance of the Study
This study is very important for several reasons. To start with, it helps to clarify the issue of discrimination against the female and male gender in advertisements. The study through its analysis of the representations of men and women in Nigerian advertising reveals the ways in which media either supports or opposes laid down gender roles. These are the areas where media scholars, advertisers, and communication practitioners can apply their skills and knowledge in producing socially responsible and culturally sensitive content.

Secondly, the research is of great value from a social and psychological standpoint. It has been demonstrated that stereotypes in advertising can alter an individual's self-concept, body image, and perception of gender roles. The study, through its audience characterization of accepting or rejecting the portrayals, provides evidence that can be used in interventions that aim at using media to foster more just and inclusive representations. The importance of this is heightened in the Nigerian setting, where male dominance still plays a significant role in the shaping of gender roles in society.

Third, this research provides practical insights for advertising and marketing practices. Knowing how gendered portrayals affect the audience's perception can, on the one hand, lead the advertisers, creators of content, and regulators of the media to come up with more inclusive campaigns that are less gender biased and that can, on the other hand, attract a varied audience. Moreover, it assures that the counter-stereotypical advertising techniques will be widely used that are capable of challenging the current gender norms and thus, bringing about social change. Finally, the study helps in policy-making and advocacy work as it supplies literature which can be the basis for media guidelines and gender representation public discourse. In the face of rapid social change, the media continues to be a major factor in determining the cultural expectations. The findings of this research can be used to support the gender equality, promoting actions, making the

change in the society's attitudes towards women and men in both domestic and professional areas.

Overall, the research serves as a link between media representation, audience perception and social norms and has opened up further investigations in gender communication and societal change areas.

3.0 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

A theoretical framework establishes the conceptual base for comprehension of the ways through which gender images in advertising affect the public perception and social values. Social Role Theory and Cultivation Theory are the theoretical underpinnings used in this study for the analysis.

3.1 Social Role Theory

Social Role Theory, elaborated by Eagly (1987), asserts that the traditional division of labor and the culturally defined roles shape the societal expectations about the proper conduct of men and women. People acquire these roles through social interaction, including media consumption, and they finally see them as the normative standards. Regarding advertising, Social Role Theory accounts for the fact that men are usually visualized in roles of power, decision-making, and public authority while women in roles of nurturing, domestic, and appearance-related. This is when of course the audience percepts what is "right" for each gender; thus, by forming and unforming social norms about gender roles (Eagly & Wood, 2012), their reinforcing representations even more accurately affect i.e. the audience.

With the use of Social Role Theory, this study looks into how advertising aids the continuation of presenting gender roles in a stereotypical way and how the audience's acceptance of these roles is influenced. The theory emphasises that media content is not just a mirror reflecting society but also a powerful source that shapes the norms and provides models of behavior that the audience may follow or resist.

3.1.1 Cultivation Theory

Cultivation Theory, proposed by Gerbner and Gross (1976), asserts that the attitudes and beliefs of the viewers are greatly influenced by the media content they have been exposed to for a long period. In the light of this theory, the audience, through the repeated viewing of the same type of characters in advertising, may come to the belief that what they see in the ads is the norm of society. Eventually, the viewers may come to regard and accept the gendered behaviors, roles, and attributes depicted in the media as true and socially permissible, although they do not represent the variety of actual experiences (Morgan & Shanahan, 2010).

The Cultivation Theory, in this study, clarifies the way that the continuous exposure to gender-stereotyped advertising leads to the acceptance of certain social expectations as normal. It offers a tool for looking at the influence of not only single ads but also the overall effect of the media's repetitive portrayal on gender through the changing audience perceptions and attitudes.

This study, by using both Social Role Theory and Cultivation Theory, not only looks at the ads' content but also examines the possible cognitive and social effects on audiences. While Social Role Theory deals with the reasons and ways of creating gender roles in advertising, Cultivation Theory deals with the long-term effect of exposure on the audience's perception and the formative process of societal norms. Thus, these theories collectively form a holistic viewpoint of the influence of gender stereotypes in advertising in the context of Nigeria.

4.0 METHODOLOGY

The study is based on a desktop research (secondary research) method where the literature on gender stereotypes in advertising and their influence on the public perception and social norms is reviewed. Desktop research is based on the analysis of existing data, studies, media content and published literature; to respond to research objectives without conducting fieldwork or gathering primary data. This method is appropriate since it provides an opportunity to comprehensively review the previous research and the media materials to spot the patterns, themes, and implications of the gendered advertising.

5.0 LITERATURE REVIEW

5.1 Portrayal of Men and Women in Advertising

Advertising is regarded as one of the most potent instruments in molding public opinion and transmitting cultural values in modern-day society.

Besides selling goods and services, advertisements are a powerful means of reinforcing social standards, especially gender norms. The portrayal of men and women in ads mirrors the societal expectations and at the same time affects the audience's attitudes and beliefs regarding what behaviors, professions, and roles are appropriate for the respective genders. Research has provided consistent results that suggest that cross-nationally stereotypical images of both genders are still the most common ones in the global media platforms including print, television, and internet ads (Ezeah & Ifebunandu, 2025).

Globally research demonstrates ads portraying men as very powerful, confident, professional, and nonchalant decision-makers while conversely women as the meek, passive, household, or merely ornamental characters (Tokmak, 2017). The aforementioned and more portrayals are not arbitrary but are already embedded in the traditional beliefs regarding gender roles long since passed from one generation to another. For instance, women's ads are generally showing them as being closely associated with house cleaning, cosmetics and caring for children, thus stressing the idea that their main worth is in looks or in being responsible for relationships. Conversely, men are depicted in public places, in charge, and in power, thus confirming their perceived ability and dominance in both workplace and society (Dai, Zhu, & Guo, 2025).

The global trends are also observed in Nigeria, where the studies indicate a very similar gendered representation pattern. Ezeah and Ifebunandu (2025) through their research on advertisements in Nigerian newspapers, found that women were mainly shown in roles that were domestic, supportive, or relational, whereas beauty, caregiving, and household chores were the themes mostly highlighting them. Men, in contrast, were depicted as having the power to command, to provide, or to make decisions, especially in ads for financial services, technology, or professional products. These portrayals vary by media, but television, print, and online advertising all show the same pattern that gender stereotypes are very much at play in the Nigerian advertising industry.

Ade-Johnson (2024) said that the Nigerian television commercials are often the same as the print ads in that they are just as effective in projecting the social norms of a patriarchal society that women are mainly confined to the home and men are in charge of

leadership, business, and public life. The portrayals are often under the radar but add up, thus the gender expectations are continuously being reinforced by the advertisements. Even in the advertisements for modern or lifestyle products, women are pictured most of the time as passive or focused on the aesthetics, while men are all around as active, authoritative, and problem-solving. The presence of these portrayals through advertisements contributes to the acceptance of gendered social expectations as necessary and influences the audience to see what is and what is not appropriate for men and women in the private and public spheres in terms of behaviour and roles.

The consequences of the portrayals are quite momentous. Not only are women commonly depicted as being supportive or in inferior roles, but men too receive most of the positive traits as having power. Thus, the advertisements are able to shape people's thinking about gender roles and their corresponding capabilities. The impact of this can be felt through the resulting aspirations, career choices, and even social interactions amongst the young and easy to influence people since for them media is the primary reference point for understanding the society's norms (Dai et al., 2025). Moreover, when it comes to the nature of advertisements being symbols, then the case of these representations is not limited to individual psychological effects; rather, it has turned out to be a major force behind the keeping up of the wider societal norms and hence, the existing structures of gender inequality are being reinforced.

Nonetheless, it should be stressed that such representations are not fixed. One can observe a gradual shift in both global and Nigerian advertising scenarios, where some advertisements already feature women in empowered or professional roles and men in caring or domestic roles. However, even though there are these changes, the stereotypical representations still exist in large numbers, signifying the continuing stronghold of the cultural traditions and patriarchal norms on media content (Ezeah & Ifebunandu, 2025).

A review of the literature shows that the advertising portrayal of men and women has always followed a distinct, persistent pattern. Men are always depicted as being in control, self-reliant, and performing public roles while women are always shown as being

housewives, beauties, and taking care of the family. It is necessary to analyze these stereotypical representations to understand the critical point of how advertising gender stereotypes back up the audience perceptions and the society's morals in the Nigerian case wherein patriarchal values are still very much alive. This literature calls for the necessity of research that not only critically examines media content but also delves into the challenges entrenched in gender norms.

5.1.1 Audience Perceptions of Gendered Advertising

Advertising is a part of a complex interplay, where its effects are determined by the interpretation of the audience. It is essential to recognize how the media's gendered portrayals are perceived and accepted or rejected by individuals. The media's impact on society has a great deal to do with the manner in which gendered advertising is handled. Advertising has long been communicating implicit norms and expectations through genders, which audiences by their cultural, social and personal contexts may accept, challenge or reinterpret (Bandura, 2001).

Extensive studies have proved that repeated exposure of stereotypical image of men and women in the media greatly influences the audience perceptions. The audience might consider women who are persistently depicted in the house, as mere decorative items or passive characters to be less competent or less professional and less suited for leadership roles. On the other hand, men who have ever been shown to be assertive, independent, and authoritative only further confirm the stereotype that men should take over the public and professional areas (Dai, Zhu, & Guo, 2025). Quite the opposite; these perceptions influence people's thinking regarding gender roles in general in society through ether direct or indirect interpretation of advertisements. Within the Nigerian advertising context, the audience's perception is strongly affected by what is seen and what is said. According to the evidence provided by Ezeah and Ifebunandu (2025), the constant exposure to stereotypical gender roles in newspaper and television advertisements in Nigeria made the public accept the view that women should primarily take care of the home and beautify themselves, whereas the men are to be in control and make all the decisions and handle money matters.

These representations not only influence personal views but also create societal anticipations about gender differences in behaviour, thereby indirectly pushing the boundaries of what society accepts and furthering the existing male-dominated power structure. The audience's image is significantly altered according to how the advertisement is framed, the tone used, and the narrative structure adopted. To clarify, an advertisement in which a woman is shown to be skillful and wise in solving a household problem may break the stereotypes and thereby being a part of empowering women. On the other hand, showing the same woman as one who cannot cope with the situation and is only concerned with her looks would be taking her back to the realm of inactive and subordinate roles. In the same way, men presented as tough in mind and strong in body may consider it as well as reinforce their norms that prevent them from displaying emotions or being vulnerable (Tokmak, 2017).

Research studies illustrate the mental processes that lead to these perceptions being created. The social learning theory indicates that people imitate the behaviors they see in media and, at the same time, adopt the attitudes and beliefs that are in harmony with the portrayals they witness (Bandura, 2001). Cultivation theory supports this point of view by pointing out the long-term effect of people getting repetitively exposed to gendered advertisements, which, slowly but surely, changes their perception of social reality, their understanding of appropriate gender roles and what behaviors are acceptable (Morgan & Shanahan, 2010).

Critically engaged audiences of media content and those who resist stereotypical messaging represent only a small portion of the consumers who, in fact, accept these portrayals as the norm, more so when advertisements are omnipresent on different platforms. Consequently, this effect on self-concept, interpersonal relationships, and even career choices influences the youth more than older people as they are the most easily influenced by media (Dai *et al*., 2025). For instance, a girl might not consider a career in IT, not because of her lack of interest but the fact that she has been exposed to adverting that sees women largely as taking care of the home, while men are going to work that is why the question of whether or not men should share in domestic duties comes to the fore.

Changing stereotypes in advertising has come to be highlighted as one of the trends in the literature where the term "femvertising" which is considered to be a more positive approach of female marketing. Such advertisements may produce opposite effects on audiences and even more so if they are aligned with the values of the viewers (Ezeah & Ifebunandu, 2025). However, the success of these campaigns largely depends on how genuine and culturally fitting they are. If perceived as mere tokens or if contrary to the prevailing societal views, ads that fight against stereotypes will not be effective in changing deep-rooted views.

There is a great diversity in the audience's perception of gendered advertising and this is influenced by several factors such as the repeating exposure, the cultural context, and the individual interpretation. The portrayal of men and women in a stereotypical way leads to the formation of beliefs regarding the gender roles that are appropriate, which influences both the individual attitudes and the norms of the society. These perceptions need to be well understood in order to analyse the social impact of advertising and devise practices that would lead to a more balanced and inclusive representation.

5.1.2 Influence of Stereotypical Advertising on Societal Norms

Stereotypical advertising, more than just a projection of individual attitudes, has a great impact on society's norms and cultural standards. Advertising is not just a way of showing social values; it is a way of influencing and making behaviours, roles, and ranks in society. Continuous display of male and female characters sends out a message about the standards of what is appropriate or attractive for women and men, thus strengthening the traditional social structure and expectations (Gerbner & Gross, 1976). In different parts of the world, the studies point to the fact that the overall effect of stereotypical advertising is to maintain social inequality by accepting strict gender roles. Men are usually shown in control or in possession of power, and their professional abilities are always highlighted, whereas women usually be portrayed as supporting, loving, and, at times, even ignoring their men. This kind of portrayal reinforces public all the time expectation that men should be the ones dominating in society's and women's hard-and-soft roles are already defined (Dai, Zhu, & Guo, 2025).

Through the constant and repeated showing of such pictures, advertising creates a social reality where traditional gender roles are not only present but also accepted.

In the case of Nigeria, a lot of research has been done to prove that the negative images in the media significantly contribute to the reinforcement of the patriarchal society. Ezeah and Ifebunandu (2025) point out that the portrayal of men in newspaper and television ads is always that of the traditional authority figures and breadwinners, while women are relegated to the roles of housewives, helpers, or relations. The socialisation process of young girls and boys is implicitly influenced by this regular portrayal through the photographs. For example, young women may internalize the belief that professional success is secondary to domestic responsibilities, while young men may perceive leadership and decision-making as inherent male prerogatives.

Stereotypical advertisements are not only influencing the society in terms of occupation or household roles. Their impact is further observed in people's expectations of behavior, standards of looks, and even in relationships among individuals. As an instance, advertisements focusing on women's beauty and homemaking reinforce the idea that social worth of women is based on their looks and ability to take care of children while men's worth is based on their skills, assertiveness, and financial status (Tokmak, 2017). These constant representations create and solidify social norms that support inequality and limit the thousands of opportunities that the two sexes would otherwise have. Together with the dominant culture and the institutionalized active gender segregation, this process is very much alive.

Eventually, Cultivation Theory is the one framework that perfectly fits for the understanding. In Gerbner and Gross's (1976) interpretation, the long view to certain media is the reality that determines the viewer's beliefs about the expectations of the social role. When it comes to advertising practice, the Gendered Portrayal exposure over and over again fashions a society's acceptance of traditional norms to the point of making that norm seem like a natural phenomenon or a given thing. In the same light, the Social Role

Theory indicates that these portrayals are really based on the culturally specified expectations regarding male and female behavior, which the audience learns through the socialization processes (Eagly & Wood, 2012).

In addition, stereotypical ads are a major factor in the continuation of societal norms via the process of intergenerational transmission. Young people exposed to media showing strict gender roles are likely to have similar views, thus passing down the expectations of the gender roles to the coming generations. This situation affects mainly the areas of education, career, and civic life because people will not only think that certain roles are for a specific gender but also that the power and opportunities in society will be divided accordingly.

On the other hand, some of the recent studies are also pointing out that the non-stereotypical or "femvertising" campaigns might have the capacity to change the picture of gender roles. Advertising showing women as powerful, independent, and in leadership positions plus men doing parenting or other unconventional activities can indirectly shift the public view and make people more supportive of the equal rights (Ezeah & Ifebunandu, 2025). However, these campaigns have not yet had a large impact, and traditional gender portrayals in the media continue to be the major factor that limits their effectiveness. Stereotypical advertising makes a powerful contribution to the enforcement of societal norms by helping to shape people's expectations regarding the gender roles, behaviors, professions, and social responsibilities that are considered appropriate. Nigeria is an example where this trend of media representations has a direct impact on the survival of patriarchal values, thus affecting both personal beliefs and group social actions. It is important to note this influence since it might help the promotion of gender equality in the media, as well as the adoption of advertising strategies that work against the spread of stereotypes.

5.1.3 Counter-Stereotypical Advertising and Its Potential to Challenge Gender Norms

Although the traditional advertising mostly reinforces the dichotomy of gender roles, the counter-stereotypical advertising, or femvertising, or progressive gender marketing, has started getting attention through a growing number of publications among the researchers. The purpose of such advertising is to challenge the portrayal of men and women in the conventional way by showing people in non-traditional roles, thereby introducing to the society norms that are more inclusive and egalitarian (Gill, 2007; Eisend, 2019). These ads not only try to sell the products but also want to change the public viewpoint by giving different narratives about the roles men and women are allowed or expected to take.

Counter-stereotypical advertising can portray women in various empowering ways such as a leader, a professional, an innovator, or a decision maker. This would mean leaving the domestic and the so-called beautification-centered roles behind. On the contrary, men's roles may be that of a caregiver, who does house chores, and who is emotionally expressive, thus breaking down the stereotype that masculinity is always associated with power, resilience, and rule over others (Eisend, 2019). The promotion of such diverse behavior patterns through these advertisements can lead to the changing of the audiences' views, thereby gradually expanding the scope of gender roles accepted by the society and eventually even changing the society's expectations. In reshaping perceptions the effectiveness of such campaigns is supported by empirical studies. For instance, Eisend and Möller (2007) research indicated that counter-stereotypical advertisements positively impacted viewers' perceptions of non-traditional gender roles, thus leading to greater acceptance of egalitarian norms. In the same way, Tokmak (2017) proved that the public's perception of women's competence and independence was boosted by the repeated exposure to women's empowering representations in ads. The implications of these researches are that counter-stereotypical advertising can be a facilitator of social change, especially when it is both culturally and emotionally in tune with the audience.

In Nigeria, however, there is a slow but definite movement towards counter-stereotypical advertising. Ezeah and Ifebunandu (2025) tracked marketing activities in the telecoms, beauty, and finance sectors where women are shown as independent consumers, business persons, or managers in office. Some of the

ads also portray men in caring or house-related activities, but they are not as much as those. This way of showing the opposite of the trend creates this audience's confusion as to where gender behavior should incline, thus possibly leading to the acceptance of more liberal attitudes concerning gender roles.

Several factors, however, moderate the effect of counter-stereotypical advertising. The effectiveness of such campaigns is impacted by cultural norms, audience interpretation, and the existence of traditional advertising. When counter-stereotypical advertisements are seen as tokenistic or not in line with the broader societal values, the audience may either ignore them or view them as unrealistic, thus restricting their power to change perceptions (Gill, 2007). On the other hand, the authentic and consistent representations that strike a chord with local cultural contexts are going to be the most successful in bringing about change in audience perceptions and social norms.

In addition, counter-stereotypical advertising is often associated with a more comprehensive social advocacy and media literacy programs. The campaigns that question the traditional gender roles are to a greater extent successful if the audience is taught to think critically and made aware of the gender issues, which will help them to identify and challenge the stereotypes in the media they encounter daily. It signifies that media tactics plus education and advocacy should work hand in hand to achieve maximum social impact (Eisend, 2019). Counter-stereotypical advertising opens up a new horizon for the disputation of the deep-rooted gender norms and the establishment of the more egalitarian social views. In the case of Nigeria, even though such advertising is in its initial stages, the first signals are positively indicating its potential to change the audience's mindset. Knowing the tactics, cultural relevance, and shortcomings of these campaigns is obligatory for the media professionals and also for the academics who are interested in the social change through advertising.

6.0 CONCLUSION

The study explored how men and women are advertised differently, the effect of gendered advertising on the audience's perception, and the use of stereotypical advertising to influence the society's values and the impact of counter-stereotypical advertising in challenging the normal gender roles. The literature clearly supports the argument that advertising is one of the most influential and powerful agents that can either reinforce or reshape societal expectations about gender.

In advertisements all over the world, and especially in Nigeria, men and women are shown in completely different lights. The expected roles of men in society are communicating authority, ,making decisions, and being independent. On the other hand, women are still shown as being passive, domestic or just 'floral'. Hence, these representations lead to very specific perceptions about the roles that each gender should play thus influencing people's beliefs, attitudes, and behaviors. One of the main effects of the constant viewing of such ads depicting stereotypes is that the individual self-image is negatively affected and at the same time the larger society norms are strengthened, thus keeping men on top and women down.

But, the situation is changing with the introduction of counter-stereotypical advertising, which could provide social change pathways. It is possible to create advertising campaigns that show women in positions of power, having careers, and being independent as well as men doing baby care or engaging in non-traditional behaviors. Such changes would have the potential to shift the mindset of the society concerning gender and bring about more equal perceptions. Although such endeavors in Nigeria are still at an early stage, there is already some proof that they can have a good impact on people's attitudes if they are culturally relevant and authentic.

Advertising has a twofold function in the society: it mirrors the contemporary social values and at the same time it has the power to change them. Media practitioners, policymakers, and scholars can work together in the struggle for gender equality in Nigerian society by analysing gendered representations, recognising their impact on the public, and advocating for non-stereotypical portrayals. The results of this

study highlight the importance of ongoing advocacy, educational efforts, and the implementation of media practices that are not only responsible but also challenge stereotypes and allow for the portrayal of both men and women in an inclusive manner.

6.1 RECOMMENDATIONS

In light of the above-stated and the findings of the study on "Gender Stereotypes in Advertising: Shaping Audience Perceptions and Social Norms," the following recommendations are set forth:

1. **Promotion of Counter-Stereotypical Advertising**

   Advertisers could go beyond the traditional confinements and dive into the creative world depicting women in powerful, professional, and decision-making roles as well as men in nurturing or non-traditional roles. This kind of showing would not only break but also contribute to the formation of a new and more equitable mindset regarding gender roles among audiences by gradually and subtly imposing the new perceptions.

2. **Media Literacy and Audience Education**

   Media companies, schools, and non-profit organizations should affirm their collaborative efforts to elevate media literacy among the audience in order to assist them in their critical analysis of the advertisements portraying different genders. The outcome will be that the audience will be able to question the stereotype rather than being the one to passively accept it.

3. **Policy and Regulatory Frameworks**

   The new guidelines proposed by the Advertising Practitioners Council of Nigeria (APCON) would, although not directly, be very effective in gradually eradicating gender-stereotypical advertising across the board and their replacements with inclusive and balanced portrayals. Besides, having a system of compliance monitoring and periodic reviews can make it easier to check the extent to which the guidelines are being followed.

4. **Research and Monitoring**

   There should be a constant flow of research in the area of gender portrayal in the media that goes hand in hand with or followed by a media monitoring initiative that by tracking the changes over time would be able to identify the trends, evaluate the impact of counter-stereotypical campaigns on the audience and society, and moreover, influence the audience and societal norms.

5. **Cultural Resonance in Campaigns**

   It is recommended that advertisers take into account the local culture in the design and implementation of the counter-stereotypical campaigns and that they are also community-friendly. Realistic, contextually appropriate portrayals will have a higher acceptance rate and also be more effective in changing perceptions and even slowly challenging the new ones.

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