

Women Perception of Cross-dressing Among Male Comedians on Instagram

Obiajulu Joel Nwolu

Mass Communication Department, Nnamdi Azikiwe university, Awka
oj.nwolu@unizik.edu.ng

Chika Onyinye Nnabuife

Mass Communication Department, Nnamdi Azikiwe university, Awka
co.nnabuife@unizik.edu.ng

Chukwunonso Chukwuagozie Nnabuife

Mass Communication Department, University of Benin
chukwunonsochukwuagozie@yahoo.co.uk

Abstract

Adverse modernism and gender discrepancies have inflicted grave injuries on social perceptions. The revolving -- still controversially perceived in certain societies -- topics around sexism and gender struggles have added flames to ended debates on gender understanding. This study set out to ascertain female audience opinion of cross-dressed male Instagram comedians, determine how the comedy skits represent the female gender, find out factors that motivate cross-dressing among male comedians and ascertain how the female audience reacts to the representation of women by male-cross dressed comedians on Instagram. The study used the survey quantitative research method. It was anchored on Technological determinism theory as propounded by McLuhan. The questionnaire was utilized to gather primary data while available literature served as the source of secondary data. The Taro Yamane technique was used to choose a sample size of 400 respondents from a population of 1,900,000. The researchers found that women do not appreciate male cross-dressed comedians, cross-dressed male comedians debase women by projecting them as dependent, unfaithful, gossips etc. Also, male comedians cross-dress because the female gender has diverse characteristics that could pass for rich comedy content and women are indifferent to their representation. The study recommended among other things that more women should be encouraged to venture into comedy and male cross-dressed comedians should foreground the strengths of the Nigerian women. Further studies can be conducted to access how cross-dressing affects comic cross-dressers choice of gender identity and expression beyond and outside the stage.

Keywords: *cross-dressing, comedians, Instagram.*

Introduction

Comedy as easy as it seems can be a difficult turf to pull, and many Nigerian comedians care a little too much about holding their audience spellbound through captivating displays and utterances. The regular Nigerian crowd exhibits uncanny love for comedy, this doesn't negate the fact that they always want more, a quest which all Instagram skit curators or Instagram comedians are trying hard to live up to by being very creative in their skit performances.

The idea of using everyday social interactions to make comedy and make people laugh is the whole essence of Instagram comedy at the moment in Nigeria. A lot can be said about how the internet is placing relevance and giving visibility to established and comedians and newcomers alike. It can be inferred by the number of prominent comic actors in the comedy industry that the terrain remains dominated by the male folk where success for a comedienne is measured by the ability to breeze through the male folk and be seen. In addition to the challenges faced by female comedians seeking to break into the comedy industry, the bar has been raised by men who cross-dress and always appear dressed as women in their comedy skits. The ranking of Nigeria's creative industry as the nation's second-largest employer of labour by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO, 2021, p.188) is hinged on its promotion of locally told stories in a fascinating manner. Prioritising our stories, norms and values have facilitated the thriving of Nigerian content as evidenced in the constant update of such content on streaming platforms like Netflix and the internet which has given the country's creatives a wider reach. Cross-dressing among male comedians appears to be one of the best-selling contents in recent times in Nigeria. While it is viewed as creativity by some, other people see it as sending wrong signals and connotations about the female gender. Questions are raised as to whether male comedians assuming female roles can be passed off as just comedy and a joke, or critically analyze the possibility of demeaning the female gender. The Nigerian comedy industry has come a long way thanks to social media. We have seen a massive upturn and a constant influx of more Instagram comedians on a day-to-day basis, many of whom are male comedians taking on female personalities by dressing as women. In light of this, veteran comedian Omobaba disapproves of this trend and advised male

comedy skit makers to stop dressing as women for their skits as this is getting out of hand (Olonilua, 2021, para. 3).

A lot of content can be created for male characters, content creation is the new oil magnet, the onus lies on the creator to ingeniously come up with novel ideas distinct from the derivative. Comedy does not just serve to entertain but has equally played an important political role in entrenching or overturning existing hierarchies of power and these are identified through reading strategies that take seriously questions of representations (Davies & Ilott, 2018, p.3).

Any and all marginalized groups have turned to the Internet to express their unconventional behaviours. This makes sense, as the virtual world of the Internet provides a safe and anonymous place that allows those individuals who live at the fringes of society to reflect upon their own paths, meet others and offer or receive advice and support without risking public condemnation or persecution (Hegland & Nelson, 2002, p. 3). Cross-dressing, therefore, involves the visual side of the identity as well and seems to be an aspect of identity that can be far more accepted online and is far easier to do the debate about cross-dressing and its effect on gender expression has dragged on for too long. Scholars (Dolan 1985; Lorber 1999; Shapiro; 2007, p.2) have examined the meaning of public performances of gender and debated whether cross-dressing destabilizes or reinscribes gender and sexuality hierarchies. The internet even as effective as it is to humans make it seamless to alter gender identities. The seamless realm of the internet allows such identities to cross-cultural boundaries instantly and without regard for real physical space.

The raging question is why do you dress like a female to pass a certain message, especially a joke, do you imply women are clowns? Is it a way to showcase one's sexuality, these and many more questions are left unanswered, but what seems to be more terrifying is the unavoidable truth that this can become our reality, the judgement and stories we are made to see as true may set a negative standard going forward these technologies permit geographically dispersed and isolated trans communities to share their stories, come to know themselves better, discover which terms describe them best and build a sense of community. In this sense, cultural conditions create the space for novel identities and once

adopted these identities may alter the meaning of gender in society at large (Darryl, 2014, p.91)

There is a lot of confusion on if the representations of women by this skit curators are true or if they are objectifying just for laughs, we get to see women as talkative and unserious, we get to see women who desire what they get from men and women who are unwilling to work, but it raises the question of if their representations are true of the female gender. One equally wonders the views of the female audience on their representation by these male cross-dressers. Representations no matter how subtle are important and should, therefore, should be treated as such. Hence, this study seeks to probe the women perception of cross-dressing among male comedians on Instagram.

Statement of the Problem

The popularity of male cross-dressers on Instagram in recent times has tripled in numbers. There is a massive breakout of Instagram celebrities who gain more followers and get hooked on fame, by dressing like females and acting like women in their comedy skits. We have seen the emergence of the likes of Josh2funny, Zicaloma, Mamankechi to state a few. These male comedians have taken comedy to a new level by mimicking female characteristics for entertainment purposes. Sometimes, these comedians have been alleged to portray women as either always hungry, wanting to get in an argument, promiscuous and unfaithful in relationships and marriage and so many others. There are concerns on whether these male Instagram cross-dressers are expressing their inclination to desire a different gender, compete with women or even making a conscious attempt to exploit the female gender through their comedy. Some of the connotations of these Instagram skits usually put the female gender in a bad light and objectifying women.

Given the novel nature of this trend especially in Nigeria, few works of literature exist to authoritatively offer arguments in this regard. Hence the purpose of this study sought to ascertain women perception of cross-dressing among male comedians on Instagram.

Objectives of the Study

1. To ascertain female audience opinion of cross-dressed male Instagram comedians.
2. To determine how the comedy skits represent the female gender.
3. To find out factors that motivate cross-dressing among male comedians.

4. To ascertain how the female audience reacts to the representation of women by male-cross dressed comedians.

Research Questions

1. What is the female audience opinion of cross-dressed male Instagram comedians?
2. How do the comedy skits represent the female gender?
3. What are the factors that motivate cross-dressing among male comedians?
4. How does the female audience react to the representation of women by male cross-dressed comedians?

Literature review

Cross-dressing on social media

Social media has been useful as an avenue to not just share information in real time but also a means of creating and promoting creative contents to a diverse audience. Among the contemporary trends in social media and for the purpose of this study, Instagram is the influx of male cross-dressers who depict female attitudes, behavioural pattern, norms and gestures for the purpose of entertainment. These comedians enjoy massive followership on Instagram. Over time, depiction of feminine characteristics and mannerism has been perceived as a point of attention and contention. The female body has been the most popular and consistent subject of art, the object of the male esthetic and the one that the patriarchy has repeatedly tried to control and monitor (Bryson, 2007; Nwigwe, 2019, p.2). This argues that the female body presents rich content which the male gender has consistent attempted to explore. This global phenomenon applies to the Nigerian society where the male gender always tries to set the standard for appreciating the quintessence of the women. Nwigwe (2019, p.3) further argues that it was hitherto forbidden and viewed as a sign of immorality for women to adorn dresses perceived as societally suitable for men in Africa and notably in South-East Nigeria. Customarily, it was out of place for a woman to be seen wearing bifurcated loincloths and their modern versions – pants, shorts, and trousers.

The sartorial change made men's bifurcated and exceedingly practical style which has been forbidden among women go out of fashion, being replaced by Western-styled shorts and

trousers, adopted around the late 19th Century (Ofonagoro 1979; Nwigwe, 2019, p.3). Recently, men have found adoption of female designated dresses as rich content for amusement. Cross-dressing ranges from simply wearing one or two items of clothing to a full-scale burlesque, from a comic impersonation to a serious attempt to pass as the opposite gender, from occasional desire to experiment with gender identity to attempting to live most of one's life a member of the opposite sex. (Devor 1993; Nwigwe, 2019, p.5). Cross-dressing has been on the increase across the globe with variations in purpose for adopting the practice by the individuals. Cross-dressing is mostly a matter of comfort or style, personal preference for clothing associated with the opposite sex, to shock others, or challenge social norms. Men dress like women and women on the other hand dress like men. Cross-dressers are sometimes viewed with contempt in Nigeria given the perception by some that cross-dressers are either gay, transgender, or lesbians. It is compounded by the Same-Sex Marriage Prohibition Act in Nigerian which prescribes 14 years jail sentence for homosexuals. Tolerance is increasingly noticeable in the Nigerian society given advancement in time and the growth of social media which serves to promote gay culture and acceptance. Usually, in literature, reality shows, theatre, and film, male cross-dressers have been painted as laughing stocks. The societal reaction towards cross-dressing in most parts of the world is negative and connotes a sense of disapproval (Farooq, 2020, p.3).

Despite the general attitude towards cross-dressing, the trend has taken a new dimension with male comedians who cross-dress majorly to entertain and mimic behaviour unique to the female gender.

Farooq (2020, p.3) argues that cross-dressing is grounded in a highly logical and universal desire: the wish to *be*, for a time, the gender one admires. He further asserts One of the foremost recorded evidence of cross-dressing is in the William Shakespeare literature- *The Merry Wives of Windsor*. Shakespear also in his plays *Taming the Shrew*, *Twelfth Night*, *Merchant of the Venice*, etc. depict cross-dressing among his characters. He presented the women to have cross-dressed to acquire masculine privilege and liberty. Cross-dressing in relation to stage plays can be traced to English literature. Women and girls disguise as male and boys and men disguise as female. It serves as a plot device in storytelling, specifically in narrative ballads, theatre, and film. Historically, some women have had to cross-dress to function in male-dominated or male-exclusive professions, such as military service.

Similarly, some men have cross-dressed to evade compulsory military service. cross-dress features predominantly in theatre and in reality shows for comic effects.

Christine cited in Farooq (2020, p.6) questions in *Sex/Gender Transition and Life-Changing Aspiration* whether it is right to mask one's true desire to cross any gender limits. A man may feel exhausted by his own identity. She compares changing one's sex or gender identity to other kind of life-changing personal transformation and projects like altering one's nationality, religion, or choice to becoming musician, parent, or getting an education. She says that we don't regard this choice to change to be abnormal based on how we perceive transformations of one's gender attributes.

Bollen (2010, p.1) in a study of cross-dressing crossing over from stage to television in Australia posits that male to female cross dressing was a popular aspect of entertainment in mid-twentieth century Australia. All-male ex-army revues and concert parties touring Australia in the late 1940s and early 1950s continued a wartime tradition of presenting female impersonators in mixed bills of variety entertainment. The prominence of female impersonation prior to the advent of television in Australia accounts for its crossover into the production of light entertainment for the new medium. The producers of variety shows drew upon the talents of stage performers and integrated cross-dressing into production for television.

The incorporation of comedic styles of cross-dressing is particularly evident in variety shows from television's first decade in Australia. On *The Bobby Limb Show* (1958–61) and *The Mobil Limb Show* (1961–64), comedian Buster Fiddess played the female roles in theatrical spoofs — for instance, Miss Anna from *The King and I* and Maid Marian in *The Adventures of Rob'em Good* (NFSA, 13468, 11998). He also appeared regularly as an ageing Aunt Gladys in domestic sketches that would invariably devolve into hilarious food fights.

Gender representation and media

Attempt at understanding gender requires understanding the difference between sex and gender. Sex of an individual, whether male or female is determined biologically. Gender on the other hand is socially constructed set of behavior patterns rather than biological. Popa & Gavrilu (2015, p.2) argues that femininity and masculinity are culturally determined and

matter of choice – they refer to pattern of behaviour and qualities of behaviour that we normally associate with being female or being male. Gender varies from sex – male or female, which centers on biology and genetic.

Both concepts can be better understood with the clarification that cultural and societal norms linked with either sex form the crux of gender. Simply put, while ‘Biology says ‘It’s a Boy!’, Gender says ‘We’ll buy the blue outfits, the train sets and the Action Men!’. Sex focuses on an individual being either male or female while gender delegates expected behavioural patterns to sexes. Gender outlines socially acceptable behaviour from males and females. Gender queries the suitability of a particular sex to play a certain role or discharge a duty. (Popa & Gavrilu, 2015, p.2).

The study of representations of gender in the media understands gender to be socially constructed – an ongoing process of learned sets of behaviors, expectations, perceptions, and subjectivities that define what it means to be a woman and what it means to be a man. Scholars argue that assumptions of gender differences based on cultural norms which assign roles based on biologically determined features negates the principle of freewill. “One is not born a woman but becomes one” is Simone de Beauvoir’s formative statement that captured the essence of this process (Lemish, 2008, p.1).

Accordingly, gender is not viewed as something originally existent in human beings, but rather it is a representation produced by how we relate to our bodies through behaviors and social relations in the practices of daily life. De Lauretis (1987) cited in Lemish, (2008, p.1) asserts:

As such, gender varies from the biological, sexual differences characterizing humans from birth. It is understood to be a product of “social technologies”, including media texts, the arts, and institutionalized discourses. For example, while it is a biological fact that women can give birth, it is a social construction that women in most societies are expected to be better suited to be the dominant caregivers of children. The media play critical role in this construction given that representations of femininity and masculinity are produced, reproduced, and circulated by them as part of a shared culture. Wide acceptance and consumption of media content have been most people to rely on it to define themselves and others by their gender

The advancement of feminist activism in the 1970s ushered increased scrutiny of women representation in media, and a discourse on how gender representation impacted on sexual imbalances. Feminist scholars documented how women were represented in limited roles in broadcast media, as housewives, mothers, and sex objects (Kanai & Dobson, 2016, p.2). Women are historically perceived as consumers of media, rather than active producers. The growth of Internet technology and social media, several women have been empowered to produce distribute media contents more easily. The increased access has led to reconsideration of categorizing women as marginalized by media through poor representation. It has birthed an ideology of digital media as a source of empowerment through media representation

The nexus between gender representations and reality have continued to attract debate from scholars. It is argued that representations do not have an original, authentic “reality” that can be represented or misrepresented accurately, but rather that gender is a form of “performance” of expected social scripts (Butler 1990; Lemish, 2008, p. 2). Since gender itself is understood to be a construction, rather than a material reality, gender representations in the media are understood themselves to be *representations of representations*, standing for the → meaning of the original subject, rather than the material subject itself. In contrast to studies of sex-role stereotyping and images of women, it does not assume that there are right or wrong, good or bad ways of representing a woman or a man. Rather, this perspective moves the emphasis from concerns for individuals to the

larger categories of femininity and masculinity and shifts the burden of responsibility from the critique of “accuracy” of representations to challenging the systems that construct and create them (Lemish, 2008, p. 2).

Similarly, building upon Spivak’s development Marxist theorization and asserts that gender representations are of two meanings in the media (Ganguly 1992; Lemish, 2008, p. 2). On one hand, it sees representations as “portraits,” or the “making present” of women and men and their gendered realities in the media. This meaning of representation calls attention to those ideologies, interests, life circumstances, and privileges (be they class, race, sexuality, or others) that influence the way gender is constructed.

The second meaning relates to “proxy,” or “speaking out for” women and men. In this regard there is a need to ask: who gets a voice in the media? Who speaks on behalf of whom? And, who gets to represent themselves? The difference between these two meanings and their interdependency can be illustrated by a discussion of *women and*→news. The first refers to women as subjects in the news – the ways in which they are being portrayed (e.g., as victims, as trophy wives, as celebrities). The second refers to women as producers of news (e.g., reporters, editors, spokespersons for organizations).

Social media in gender representation in Nigeria

The media play important roles as they are influential sources in society. They report on current events, provide frameworks for interpretation, mobilize citizens concerning various issues, reproduce predominant culture and society, and entertain. (Llanos and Nina, 2011, p.7).

The media have numerous roles in gender representation. The following are the functions of the media in gender representation:

1. The media can be important in terms of employment and presentation of female staff at all levels and in the representation of women and men (in terms of fair gender portrayal and the use of neutral and non-gender specific language. Fair gender portrayal in the media should be a professional and ethical consideration, similar to respect for accuracy, fairness and honesty. (White, 2009, p.7)

2. Media and communication is an invaluable tool in creating awareness of challenging gendered power structures. The media can have a huge impact on the social construction of gender. (Bau, 2009, p.2).

3. The media plays a transformative role in achieving gender equality because they create gender-sensitive and gender-transformative content and breaking gender stereotypes.

The place of gender in development cannot be overemphasized. Lanihun (2003, p. 72) states that gender is an insignificant social figure because it influences the interpretation of experience. The Nigerian media environment has raised the perception of the reason for the surge in interest among laypeople in gender discourse. Disparities, inequalities and injustice concerning the relations between the sexes in the country.

Lanahun explains that gender is socially constructed, not biologically determined. Accordingly, terms like masculine and feminine are used to reflect social constructions of gender, while 'male' and 'female' are used as biological terms to depict sex. Thus, gender does not depend on biology but on ideology and material culture. (Ashong & Batta, 2011, p.2).

Okunna (2002, p.9) has observed that in Nigeria, men produce an overwhelming portion of mass media messages. A staggering 95 per cent of journalists reporting the news in Nigeria organs of media were male (GMMP, 2000; Ashong & Batta, 2011, p.4). Going further, Ashong & Batta (p.4) states that considering other studies conducted by Okunna and her associates, the following can be highlighted:

- Of the 101 reporters whose by-lines appeared in 42 news magazine stories, 91 per cent were male while nine per cent were females. Pate (1994) observes a similar trend in his study of the status of women in Nigerian broadcast media.
- In product advertising, of the 95 per cent of advertisements that used photos of women, 35 per cent showed them in a domestic setting while 35 per cent used their photographs as mere decoration on the background.
- A disproportionate 86 per cent of people in the news were male while women accounted for a mere 14 percent.

The marginalization of women by the media is a global problem. Hence, the conclusion can be drawn from the findings above that whereas women constitute the majority of the gender of those who work for the media, the decisions and policies pertaining to media in

Nigeria are conceived, articulated and predominantly implemented by men. Therefore, the principles of gender justice should not be negated and there should be a call for a gender mainstreaming agenda appropriate for a 21st Century Nigeria. Conclusively, the Nigerian media industry needs to be encouraged to produce gender-transformative content and to develop self-regulatory equality policies, including access to decision-making positions.

Theoretical Framework

Technological determinism theory

Technological determinism theory strives to explain the relationship between our technological environment and social consequences. The theory as propounded by Marshall McLuhan, a Canadian communications theorist, stipulates that all technology is communication, an extension of ourselves that permits further reach through time and/or space (McLuhan, 1964, p.23). He placed the main importance of a message in its medium or means of conveyance and not its content (Davie, 2021, p.1) His main argument was that the medium is always the message because it is the medium that shapes and controls the scale and forms of human association and action. According to McLuhan (1964, p.24), the content of any new, current media is always the format of the medium that came before it. The content of film is that of photography and the phonograph (or sound recording in general), quite often with the narrative structure and dialogue of books and plays. The content of television is essentially film, and the content of the Internet is an amalgamation of television, photography, and text.

The technological determinist view is a *technology-led* theory of social change: technology is seen as 'the prime mover' in history. It stipulates that particular technical developments, communications technologies or media, or, most broadly, technology, in general, are the sole or prime antecedent causes of changes in society, and technology is seen as the fundamental condition underlying the pattern of social organization (Chandler, 1995, p. 4).

Applied to this study, the theory argues that Instagram rather than the users prompted the introduction of cross-dressing among male comedians. It says that technology, in this sense -Instagram is the sole cause of change in the form of comedy created by comic actors.

Technological determinists interpret technology in general and communications technologies in particular as the basis of society in the past, present and even the future. The theory posits that society will continue to witness changes so far technology keeps evolving and new ones continuously introduced. New technologies transform society at every level, including institutions, social interaction and individuals. At the least, a wide range of social and cultural phenomena such as cross-dressing are seen as shaped by technology. Proponents of the theory say the acceptance of cross-dressing among males and females was driven by technology which has redefined the worldview of the society towards the phenomena. The theory sees 'Human factors' and social arrangements as a secondary form of influence.

New media such as Instagram structure information in a manner typical of them, thereby affecting the psyche of the user, and even cause social change. The proponents of technological determinism argue that society is influenced and shaped by technological development. Society has to adjust and adapt to new technologies and innovations (Hauer, 2017, p.1). The negative consequences of technological development are the result of poor use by the people, not of the very nature of technology.

Methodology

Considering the nature of this study which sought to unravel women perception of cross-dressing among male comedians on Instagram, the quantitative survey research method was adopted. Survey according to Asemah, Gajbawu, Ekharefo & Okpanachi (2012, p.107) is an empirical study that uses questionnaires or interviews to discover descriptive characteristics of a phenomenon. Survey is particularly suitable to ascertain the judgement of a group of people on their beliefs. Agreeing to surveys efficacy, Wrench Thomas-Maddox, Richmond, & McCrosky, (2008, p.213) view survey as a social scientific method for gathering quantifiable information about a specific group of people by asking the group members questions about their attitudes, values, beliefs, behaviours, knowledge, and perceptions. The research method helped the researchers to ascertain female audience opinion of cross-dressed male Instagram comedians, determine how the comedy skits represent the female gender, find out factors that motivate cross-dressing among male

Nwolu, Nnabuife & Nnabuife

comedians and ascertain how the female audience react to the representation of women by male-crossing comedians. The study drew its population from an Instagram handle - Josh2funny with 1,900,000 (one million, nine hundred thousand) followers as of 6th August, 2021. Josh2funny's handle was chosen using simple random technique. To obtain data from respondents, the researchers created an online questionnaire using Google Form consisting of open and closed-ended questions. A sample size of 400 was arrived at using the Taro Yamani Formula. The questionnaire generated using Google form was shared among the followers of Josh2funny on Instagram using the purposive sampling method. The questionnaire was accessible to the respondents between 13th July to 6th August, 2021. The questionnaire comprised 15 questions. A total of 390 responses were received during the period, representing a 98 per cent return rate. Generated data were analysed using simple percentage tables and charts to aid comprehension.

Taro Yamane's formular goes thus:

$$n = \frac{N}{1 + Ne^2}$$

where: n = sample size

N = population size

e = sampling error (usually .10, .05 and .01 acceptable error)

^ = raised to power

$$\text{Therefore, } n = \frac{N}{1 + Ne^2} = n = \frac{1,900,000}{1 + 70202(0.05)^2}$$

$$n = \frac{1,900,000}{1 + 1,900,000 * 0.0025}$$

$$n = \frac{1,900,000}{4,751}$$

$$n = 400$$

Data Presentation and Analysis

This section presents the results of the Survey study conducted. From the data collected, answers to the research questions which guided the study are presented below:

All the respondents (100%) were females. This was informed by the nature of the study which sought to gauge women perception of cross-dressing among male comedians on Instagram.

Table 1: Age of respondents

Response	Frequency	Percentage
18-25	171	43.8%
26-33	171	43.8%
34-41	36	9.4%
42 and above	112	3
Total	390	100

Table 1 shows that majority of the respondents representing 88 percent age between 18-33 years. This is followed by those aged 34-41 at a distant 9.4 per cent while 3 per cent affirmed to be 42 and above.

Table 2: Use of Instagram

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	390	100 %
No	0	0 %
Total	390	100

An analysis of Table 2 shows that all the respondents (100%) use Instagram. This is an indication that Instagram enjoys massive followership by members of the public.

Table 3: Frequency of Instagram use

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Sometimes	232	59.4
Often	158	40.6
Never	0	0
Total	390	100

Table 3 indicates that most of the respondents representing 59.4% use Instagram sometimes while a large sample of the respondents (40.6%) often utilise Instagram. This is a pointer that Instagram is one of the most used social network platforms.

Table 4: Exposure to cross-dressed male comedians

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	390	100
No	0	0
Total	390	100

According to data presented in Table 4, all of the respondents (100) are exposed to cross-dressed male comedians on Instagram. This shows that male Instagram comedians are popular among the studied population.

Table 5: appreciation of male cross-dressers comedy skits

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	220	56.3%
No	170	43.7 %
Total	390	100

Data presented in Table 5 shows that while 56.3 per cent of the respondents like the comedy skits of cross-dressed male comedians, 43.7% do not find them appealing. This represents a close gap between those who like these set of comedians and their form of comedy and those who do not.

Table 6: Reasons for disliking male dressed cross-dressed comedians

Response	Frequency	Percentage
They irritate me	83	21.4%
They aren't funny to me	167	42.9%
I don't find cross-dressing appealing	84	21.4%
They debase/abuse women	56	14.3 %
Total	390	100

Table 6 indicates that among the reasons for not enjoying comedy skits of male cross-dressers are that they are not funny (42.9%), respondents do not find them funny (21.4%), they are irritating (21,4%) and they debase/abuse women (14.3%). It can be deduced that most of the respondents do not follow male cross-dressed comedians on Instagram

because they do not find their mimicking of women funny. A lesser percentage are of the view that cross-dressed comedians abuse women.

Table 7: responses on whether male cross-dressed Instagram comedians present women in good light

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	151	38.7%
No	239	61.3%
Total	390	100

An analysis of Table 7 shows that a higher percentage (61.3%) of the respondents said that women are not presented in good light by male cross-dressed Instagram comedians compared to 38 per cent that think otherwise. This shows that most women are not satisfied with how women are been presented by male cross-dressers.

Table 8: responses on if the male comedians depict true reality of the female gender

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	208	53.3%
No	182	46.7%
Total	390	100

Reasons why respondents think women are not well presented –

Data obtained from open ended question on the rationale behind lack of positive representation of women, the respondents adduce that the cross-dressed male comedians always make mockery of females even though it might be true, they try to display what the male society think of women such as being needy, clingy, angry, cunning, unable to provide for themselves, etc. Also, among the reasons are - it is wrong to assume what you are not, they portray women as gossips, brainless and problematic and their dressing is totally different from what I wear as a lady.

Responses on why male comedians cross-dress

Majority of the respondents said male comedians cross dress for the following reasons: A satire to show the humour in female gender; because they can't make it among their peers; the female gender have diverse characters that are very funny and depictable - what they depict is a true representation of the female gender, 90% of their followers are female and always yearn for more of their comedy; for fun and money; they found a niche that's untapped, to make the skit more fun and to fit into the role that they are playing.

Table 9: Do you find cross-dressed male comedians more funny than other male comedians?

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	61	15.6
No	329	84.4
Total	390	100

Data presented in Table 9 shows that majority of the respondents (84.4%) do not find cross-dressed male comedians more funny than other male comedians compared to a distant 15.6% that disagreed. This is a testament that though cross-dressing is a trend among comedians at the moment, but they do not enjoy more followership on Instagram.

Responses on why respondents find male cross-dressed comedians funnier -

Bulk of the respondents think they put in more effort to assume the role of women. Some others think it is a shift from the norm. Also, some said they are funnier because they depict a true representation of the female gender, the female gender are full of drama, these comedians depict their lifestyle for the fun of it they are not doing it for the sake of mockery; Not all of them are more funny - some are irritating, but the good ones that plays the role well makes it more enjoyable by their demonstrations, if not over demonstrations.

Table 10: respondents' view of representation of females by male cross-dressers

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Satisfied	50	12.9
Furious	151	38.7
Indifferent	189	48.4
Total	390	100

Table 10 shows that a greater percentage of the respondents (48.4%) are indifferent about the representation of females by male cross-dressers, closely followed by 38.7 per cent who feel furious by these comedians while 12.9% are satisfied with how women are represented. This shows that while majority might be unconcerned by the portrayal of women, a large population of women feel concerned that these male cross-dressed comedians do not paint true pictures of the female gender.

Table 11: responses on possible exploitation of female gender by male cross-dressers

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	134	34.4
No	256	65.6
Total	390	100

Findings presented in Table 11 shows that majority of women representing 65.6 per cent feel the male cross-dressed comedians are exploiting the female gender for personal benefit while distant 34.4% do not feel exploited by these comedians.

Responses on why they feel women are exploited -

Respondents cited the following as reasons why they feel women are been exploited: their actions are informed by inability to become popular while maintaining their gender, they decided to depict the female gender in a negative light for clout; female content should be left for them,

Discussion of Findings, Conclusion and Recommendation

Research question one sought to ascertain the female audience opinion of cross-dressed male Instagram comedians, the study found that the majority of the study population representing 56.3% said they do not like comedy skits of cross-dressed male comedians on Instagram. Adducing reason for this lack of interest in such comedy skits, most of the respondents said such comedy skits are not funny to them, followed by those who said they are irritated by such comedy skits. The percentage of those who feel irritated tallies with those who do not find them appealing (21.4%). Additionally, 14.3 per cent of the respondents feel women are being debased by such comedians. This tallies with Kanai & Dobson (2016, p.2) who in their study quoted how feminist scholars documented how women were represented in limited roles in broadcast media, as housewives, mothers, and sex objects. This shows that despite the advancement of time, concerns have persisted on the representation of women by the media.

The second research question sought to determine how the comedy skits represent the female gender, the study found that most women opine that cross-dressed male comedians do not represent women positively but they agree that the comedy skits depict the true reality of women in the Nigerian society. Though the respondents believe male cross-dressed comedians emphasize more on the weaknesses of the female gender in their comedy skits, however, they (respondents) agree that the plot is based on true mannerisms of the women. Highlighting the reason for the view on negative representation, women among others feel cross-dressing among male Instagram comedians display the male perspective of women which view women as being dependent, cunny etc. The study also found that their sense of fashion is distant from the reality of female dress-code. This agrees with Kanai & Dobson (2016, p.2) which found that women are historically perceived as consumers of media, rather than active producers. It also aligns with Lemish (2008, p.2) in his study of gender representation in the media that described women as subjects in the news – how they are being portrayed (e.g., as victims, as trophy wives, as celebrities).

Focusing on the third research question which sought to find out the motive behind cross-dressing among male comedians, the research uncovered that male comedians cross-dress

because the female gender has diverse characteristics that could pass for rich comedy content. Also, since a lot of their followers are females, they identify more with the content when it's related to their gender and daily routines cum challenges. Responses equally showed that the niche is emerging and barely explored, hence the new trend to harness the potentials of cross-dressing for amusement. However, the research revealed that the majority of the female audience do not find the male cross-dressers funnier than their colleagues who do not cross-dress. This points to the fact that though the niche is trendy, it does not guarantee massive followership against those sticking to their gender roles. This finding agrees with that of Devor (1993) cited in Nwigwe, (2019, p.5) which sees the motive behind cross-dressing as ranging from a comic impersonation to a serious attempt to pass as the opposite gender, from occasional desire to experiment with gender identity to attempting to live most of one's life a member of the opposite sex. Farooq (2020, p.3) notes that William Shakespeare literature- *The Merry Wives of Windsor* depicted cross-dressing among his characters. He presented the women to have cross-dressed to acquire masculine privilege and liberty. This supports the finding of this study that male cross-dressers do so to express female attributes.

The fourth research question focused on female audience reaction to the representation of women by male cross-dressed comedians, a higher percentage of the women (48%) are indifferent to their representation closely followed by 38.7% that are infuriated by these comedians and their acts. Despite this view, most women do not feel being exploited by male comedians taking on female roles to entertain their audience. To them, engaging in an act with the passion to entertain your audience does not amount to exploitation of their gender. This relates to the finding of Bollen (2010, p.1) in a study of cross-dressing crossing over from stage to television in Australia which found that male to female crossdressing was a popular aspect of entertainment in mid-twentieth century Australia. The similarity lies in the recognition of the motive for cross-dressing which is for comic effect.

Conclusion

The study concludes that women do not fancy comedy skits of male-cross dressers on Instagram. The Instagram female audience feel male cross-dressers do not project women

in good light rather, are quick to capitalise on the weaknesses of the female gender. The researchers also concluded that cross-dressing among male comedians is informed by the desire to be ingenious and create comic content worthy of high social media traffic. Female audiences do not feel exploited by these comedians. Further studies can be conducted to access how cross-dressing affects comic cross-dressers choice of gender identity and expression beyond and outside the stage.

Recommendations

1. The male cross-dressed comedians should intensify their effort at producing quality comic content that will appeal to their audience.
2. Male Instagram cross-dressed comedians should put more effort in portraying women positively rather than merely serve as purveyors of caricature as positive female attitudes can equally make for comedy content.
3. The mannerism of the female gender should be foregrounded to advocate for female inclusion and gender equity in Nigerian society.
4. Given the far-reaching potential of Instagram and comedy to galvanize opinion and project topical issues, more women should be encouraged to venture into comedy as they better understand their gender and will better project themselves.

References

- Asemah S. A., Gajbawu M., Ekharefo D. O., & Okpanachi R. A. (2012). Research methods and procedures in mass communication. Great future press.
- Ashong, A. C., & Batta, H. E. (2011). Gender representation in communication education and practice in Nigeria. *Journal of Communication*, 2(1), 13-22.
- Bollen, J. (2010). Cross-dressed and crossing over from stage to television. *Media International Australia*, 134(1), 141-150.
- Bryson, V. 2007. Gender and Politics of Time. Pristol: The Policy Press.
- Butler, J. (1990). *Gender trouble: Feminism and the subversion of identity*. New York: Routledge.

- Chandler, D. (1995). Technological or Media Determinism.[Online] Available at: <http://www.aber.ac.uk/media/Documents/tecdet/tecdet.html> (Accessed July 2021).
- Darryl, B. H. (2014). *Trans Toronto: An oral history*. William Rodney Press
- Davies, H., & Illott, S. (2018). Gender, sexuality and the body in comedy: performance, reiteration, resistance. *Comedy Studies*, 9(1), 2-5.
- De Lauretis, T. (1987). *Technologies of gender: Essays on theory, film, and fiction*. Bloomington:Indiana University Press, pp. 1–30.
- Davie, G. (2021). Technological determinism theory. Retrieved from Mass communication theory: <https://masscommtheory.com/theory-overviews/technological-determinism/>
- Devor, H. 1993. "Cross-Dressing, Sex and Gender by Vern L. Bullough; Bonnie Bullough: A Review." *The Journal of Sex Research* 30 (3): 289–291.
- Dolan, Jill. 1985. Gender impersonation onstage: Destroying or maintaining the mirror of gender roles? *Women and Performance: A Journal of Feminist Theory* 2:5-11.
- Essential McLuhan (1999). New York: Basic Books.
- Farooq, Q. (2020). *Eroticism and Mysteries of Cross-Dressing: Increasing Trends of Male to Female Cross-Dressing in Pakistani Society*.
- Ganguly, K. (1992). Accounting for others: Feminism and representation. In L. F. Rakow (ed.), *Women making meaning: New feminist directions in communication*. NewYork: Routledge, pp. 60–79.
- Hegland, J. E., & Nelson, N. J. (2002). Cross-dressers in cyber-space: Exploring the Internet as a tool for expressing gendered identity. *International Journal of Sexuality and Gender Studies*, 7(2), 139-161.
- Hauer, T. (2017). Technological determinism and new media. *International Journal of English Literature and Social Sciences*, 2(2), 239174.
- Kanai, A., & Dobson, A. (2016). Digital media and gender. *The Wiley Blackwell encyclopedia of gender and sexuality studies*, 1-4.
- Lanihun, A. (2003). *Communicating for development purposes: A gender perspective*. Kraft Books Limited, Ibadan. pp. 72-86.
- Lemish, D. (2008). Gender: Representation in the media. *The International encyclopedia of communication*.
- Llanos, B., & Nina, J. (2011). *Election Coverage from a Gender Perspective: A media monitoring manual*.

Nwolu, Nnabuife & Nnabuife

- Lorber, Judith. 1999. Crossing borders and erasing boundaries: Paradoxes of identity politics. *Sociological Focus* 32:355-70.
- McLuhan, M. (1964) *Understanding Media: The Extensions of Man*. 1st ed. New York: Bantam.
- Nwigwe, C. (2019): Breaking the Code: Female Cross-Dressing in Southeastern Nigeria, *Fashion Theory*, DOI: 10.1080/1362704X.2019.1697025
- Ofonagoro, W. I. 1979. Trade and Imperialism in Southern Nigeria, 1881–1929. New York: Nok Publishers.
- Okunna, C. S. (2002). Gender and communication in Nigeria: Is this the twenty-first century? Department of Mass Communication, Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Akwa, Nigeria.
- Olonilua, A. (2021). Male skit makers should stop dressing like women – Omobaba. Retrieved from https://punchng.com/male-skit-makers-should-stop-dressing-like-women-omobaba/?utm_medium=Social&utm_source=Facebook&fbclid=IwAR2Q5ltmewxp3Aww18XaDBA1W-GCjeo_Hx72C7zdOZem-KNCQrDAaeVl53w#Echobox=1618232320
- Pate, U. A. (1994). Status of women in Nigerian broadcasting media: A case for representation and upward mobility. *The Journal of development communication*, 1(5), 75-83.
- Popa, D., & Gavriiliu, D. (2015). Gender representations and digital media. *Procedia-Social and Behavioral Sciences*, 180, 1199-1206.
- Shapiro, E. (2007). Drag kinging and the transformation of gender identities. *Gender & Society*, 21(2), 250-271.
- United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO). (2021). The African film industry: trends, Challenges and opportunities for growth. Retrieved from <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000379165.locale=en>
- White, A. (Ed.). (2009). *Getting the balance right: gender equality in journalism*. International Federation of Journalists, Résidence Palace, rue de la loi 155, 1040 Brussels, Belgium
- Wrench, J. S., Thomas-Maddox, C., Richmond, V. P., & McCrosky, J. C. (2008). Quantitative research methods for communication. Oxford university press.