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Full Length Research Paper

Sex stereotyping in advertising and effects on the self-esteem of Nigerian women

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This study examined the relationship between how sex stereotypes are presented in advertisements, and the value women attach to themselves in the society with regards to their self-esteem. Survey method was adopted for the study using questionnaires to sample 200 hundred female students of Benue State University Makurdi. Findings revealed that, like many other studies carried out in the past by scholars, advertisements have set a particular standard for women through the sex roles played out. This results in women objectifying themselves and feeling they are good for nothing except as sex objects to men. This of course hinders their productivity in the society as a result of the low self-esteem which equally manifest with other consequences such as health problems like depression and even suicide. The study therefore recommends among others that there is need for governments of affected societies particularly Nigeria to step up from making promises for women emancipations towards taking action to bring culprits of women unfair representation to serve as deterrent to others.

Key words: Sex stereotype, objectification, women, mass media, advertisements, portrayal, gender, self-esteem.

INTRODUCTION

The mass media worldwide have set standards for sex roles which are expected to be followed strictly by members of the society. The society is said to define what constitutes perfection as well as the price that must be paid to attain such perfection. For American woman, Berberick (2010) asserts that the answer is often the media and that social trends highlight how the media and its "ideal" image of femininity have impacted women in unprecedented ways. In defining sex role for men and women, the latter are often at the receiving end in

societies because a standard for perfection is set for them to attain or consider themselves 'losers'.

In Nigeria, the result of this stereotypes have resulted in a low-self-esteem among women. Most Nigeria women are highly unsatisfied with their physical bodies. This is because women have always been stereotyped in the media as decorative objects for the media pages and screens. Or at most, as women who are only good as babies' producers and home managers. This is in line with Ford et al (1998) and Kang (1997) assertion that:

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Advertising has been accused of stereotyping images of women and previous research has established this fact that advertisement portrays women as been dependent on men, been home makers, regarded as sex objects, been childish, weak, irrational, subordinate creature compared to men. But most prominent is the portrayal of women as sex objects.

Kilbourne's assertions confirmed this study's findings that women in Nigeria are consistently concerned with their physical appearances. This is in order to meet up with the set standards in the media. Most of the women sampled confirmed changing their appearances or wanting to do so no matter what it takes in order to look like the models they see in advertisements and of course attract the ideal man.

Advertisements have succeeded in assigning sex roles as determined by the society. At a tender age, boys and girls are indoctrinated through advertisements to believing that there are masculine roles that must and should be for the boys who must grow to be men while the girls are assigned their roles in the kitchen and only good for satisfying the yearnings of men. Berberick (2010) buttressed that:

The representation of women in the media has always been exploitative. It has, throughout the years, reduced women to being nothing more than objects to be won, prizes to be shown off, and playthings to be abused. It has also created a definition of beauty that women compare themselves to. Also, men compare the women in their lives to what they see on television screens, in magazines, and on billboards. Both the self and society has suffered because of the objectification, sexism, exploitation and assessment.

This false representation of the female sex has many dire consequences on women in societies. In the western countries for instance, Berberick,(2010) opined that:

Because of the harmful "ideal" put forth by the Western media and accepted in large by American patriarchal society there are drastic increases in plastic surgery, a steady (not decreasing) number of sexual assaults, and an overwhelming occurrence of eating disorders. Yet, when a woman gazes at an airbrushed beauty wishing for the model's thighs or slender hips she fails to register that the image she sees before her is not real. Our understanding of the images we see seldom takes into consideration the "beauty" we see are fabrications. These images are designed by graphic artists commissioned to change appearance and stimulate desire.

In African continents especially in Nigeria, the situation is not different. In the past, cultural beliefs established that the beauty of a woman lied in how much excess fat her body contained. In some parts of Nigeria for instance,

some cultures took their time to prepare a woman for marriage through what was referred to as the 'fattening process'. This was a process where by a woman was secluded for months and fed with assorted foods to ensure she acquires excess fat before been married off to her husband. Other cultures saw the well-being of women they married off in how 'fat' they look. Excess fat on a woman meant she was well taken care of by her husband. Why slim or thin was considered a high level of malnutrition and poverty in general.

This scenario in Africa has changed over the years with the mass media advertisements often assaulting the senses of the audience with the perfect images as well as the ideal sex roles for men and women which they are expected to conform to if they must be recognised in society. The imbalance between women and men in Nigeria society is captured better by Ojiakor (1997) who stated that "The Nigerian men have always believed that Nigeria belongs to them and women are at best the rent-paying tenants. Over the centuries, women have struggled to say no to this misconception." But from all indication, such efforts have not yielded positive result since many women especially Nigerian women find they are not happy with themselves or their bodies and the media machine is pushing more images that refuse to let women find peace.

This of course has affected women gravely. Most Nigerian women do not believe that they possess intellectual abilities to help improve themselves and their country. They believe that their worth lies in their physical beauty and ability to satisfy men. Hence the inability to achieve the standards of beauty in advertisements results in women feeling inadequate and generally depressed and angry human beings. From this background, this study asses the representation of stereotypical roles especially in advertising, how negative or positive this has impacted on women in Nigeria especially with regards to their self-esteem.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Sexual Objectification (SO) Theory (Fredrickson and Roberts, 1997) postulates that many women are sexually objectified and treated as an object to be valued for its use by others. SO occurs when a woman's body or body parts are singled out and separated from her as a person and she is viewed primarily as a physical object of male sexual desire (Bartky, 1990). Objectification theory posits that SO of females is likely to contribute to mental health problems that disproportionately affect women (that is, eating disorders, depression, and sexual dysfunction) via two main paths. The first path is direct and overt and involves SO experiences. The second path is indirect and subtle and involves women's internalization of SO experiences or self-objectification (Fredrickson and Roberts, 1997). Self-objectification manifests in a greater

emphasis placed on one's appearance attributes (rather than competence-based attributes) and in how frequently a woman watches her appearance and experiences her body according to how it looks (McKinley and Hyde, 1996; Noll and Fredrickson, 1998).

Sex stereotyping in advertising

Gender or Sex stereotyping is formed by preconceived ideas whereby males and females are arbitrarily assigned characteristics and roles determined and limited by their sex. It is based on the conviction that men and women are biologically and socially evolved to be suited different tasks: private and familiar to women, and public and professionals to men. Sex stereotyping can limit the development of the natural talents and abilities of boys and girls, women and men, as well as their educational experiences and life opportunities. Gender stereotypes in mass media have various shades: from women's images and iconographic representation, to their mention in different topics compared to men, to a general under-representation of women in news (Pozzi, 2012).

There are numerous empirical evidences to show that women are stereotypically represented in the mass media especially through advertising where they assign roles in ways that do not necessarily match reality. This often negative representation of women in advertising and its effect on young women is a source of concern for many researchers (Matlin, 1987). Ferrante et al. (1988) stated that the portrayal of women in television advertisements is criticised by many who believe that women's depicted roles in commercials have not kept pace with women's changing roles in society.

Stereotypical portrayals of men According to Doyle (1989), whose research focuses on masculinity children's television typically shows males as "aggressive, dominant, and engaged in exciting activities from which they receive rewards from others for their 'masculine' accomplishments." Television programming for all ages disproportionately depicts men as serious confident, competent, powerful, and in high-status 'positions. Men are presented as hard, tough, independent, sexually aggressive, unafraid, violent, totally in control of all emotions, and-above all-in no way feminine (Wood 1994).

While majority of advertisements in the mass media often portrays men as been powerful, strong and capable of facing any challenges that come their way, women (no matter how independent) are seen to be dependent on men. In African cultures particularly Nigeria as the case study, it is common to see self-sufficient unmarried women mocked that they are nothing without a man behind them to complete their life circle. While boys are mocked for behaving in certain ways like 'a woman'.

Women are portrayed as weaker sex; they are portrayed as people who are weak; who do not have

strength. Thus, when it comes to the advertisement of products that show strengths on television, men are used while women are left out (Asemah et al., 2013). Wood (1994) concludes that these stereotypical representations of males and females reinforce a number of; harmful beliefs. These stereotypes underline the requirement that men must perform, succeed, and conquer in order to be worthy.

Another constant theme in media is that women are caregivers and men are providers. Corresponding to this is the restatement of men's inability in domestic and nurturing roles. Horovitz (1989) for instance, in commercials men are regularly the butt of jokes for their ignorance about nutrition, child care, and housework when media portray women who work outside of the home, their career lives typically receive little or no attention. Although these characters have titles such as lawyer or doctor, they are shown predominantly in their roles as homemakers, mothers and wives.

Another prominent theme in mediated depictions of relationships between women and men is representation of women as subject to men's sexual desires. Dispenza (1975) suggests that women are primarily used by advertisers to sell products to both women and men on the basis of their sexual appeal to men. In female-oriented advertisements, women are invited to identify with the female product representative who is offered the ultimate reward, that is, success with males, as a result of using the product. In male-oriented advertisements, male consumers are promised the portrayed female as the bonus that comes with the product. Overall, it is believed that the unfair representation of the female sex with regards to the male sex can result in negative effects in women. In this case, women's value of themselves will be reduced drastically to a feeling of worthlessness.

Women status in society

The overall status of women in the world and Nigeria in particular, leaves much to be desired. Beside the fact that women are unfairly represented in the media, Osalor (2012) observed that, women are economically marginalized. According to Osalor (2012):

Women own only one percent of the wealth of the world, receive ten percent share in the overall income of the world, and hold only fourteen percent of the leadership posts and offices in the public and private sectors. Apart from this, women own only one percent of the overall world's land despite the fact they produce almost half of the overall world's food.

In education, women are said to have lower literacy rates. Osalor (2012) reported that Over 640 million of the women in the world are illiterates with 60% of the out-of-school 121 million children being girls. The

Table 1. The Representation of Men and Women in Advertising.

How men and women are represented in advertising	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Women are extremely thin, young, spotless, tall and provocatively dressed and must remain beautiful	30	15.7
Women's place is in the kitchen and must take care of their men	54	28.3
Men must provide for family, women must have babies and care for home	32	16.7
All of the above	75	39.3
None of the above	-	-
Total	191	100

marginalization of women in these aspects according to Osalor is not only due to legal discrimination but due to subtle barriers such as their work load, mobility and low bargaining positions in the household and community prevent them from taking advantage of their legal rights. In their status of employment, the best office for women as assigned by the society is under the umbrella of housewives. In paid jobs, women can only boast of 24% of senior managerial positions globally, 34% of which are privately held businesses (Osalor, 2012).

Politically, women are still way behind in closing the gap between them and their male counterpart in occupying high political positions. Women are greatly underrepresented in the political arena. This of course hinders their voicing in policy making as the saying that majority carries the vote come to play. In this regards, Swami et al. (2010) noted that:

In patriarchal societies, the roles and privileges accorded to women are inferior to those assigned to men, and as such, sexism plays a central role in the continuing oppression of women.

Not only are women under-represented in the news media, their images in media content leave much to be desired. In advertising, women are still portrayed in traditional roles that reinforce gender stereotypes; their photographs are also used as mere decorations in advertisements. This unfair representation of women can be attributed a great deal to the way women are portrayed in the media in sexist manner.

As cited in Berberick (2010), following a set of three studies In 2010 that "examined the associations among sexist beliefs, objectification of others, media exposure and three distinct beauty ideals and practices," Swami et al. (2010), found that sexism exists where beauty ideals and practices are rigidly consumed and followed. Hence the mass media especially through the medium of advertising is considered the worst culprit in the crime against women in the name of sex stereotyping.

METHODOLOGY

Survey design was used to carry out this study. A structured

question was designed in a way to control the responses of the respondents. 200 Benue State University Undergraduate female students were drawn to constitute from the population of study as sample size. The reason for the choice of the female students was owing to the fact that the university is one common place well represented by females. In addition, the fact that these young women are highly exposed to the mass mediated messages particularly advertisements and often times more highly at risk of being influenced and able to influence others due to peer pressure. The researcher with the help of assistant distributed and collected the questionnaires within two days. Primary data retrieved were tabulated using simple percentages to analyse.

RESULT

Out of the 200 questionnaires distributed to the respondents, only a total of 191 representing 99.5% was recovered. Summary of result obtained from respondents is presented in tables.

Table 1 provides answers to the question aimed at ascertaining the representation of the male and female sexes in advertising. A clear response from the Table 1 is the fact that women are familiar with advertisements featuring men and women but in stereotypical roles. This indicates the fact that women are represented as sex objects who are often thinner than normal, young and stainless and in most cases provocatively dressed. In addition to this is the fact that the best place for a woman is considered to be in the kitchen. This finding is in line with Miller and Downey (1999) findings that thinness is often presented positively in the media, while being overweight is negative. If women are overweight, they risk being perceived in a negative light, which may subsequently lower their self-esteem. Okunna (2000) stressed that women were portrayed as wayward and of low morality, easily lured by material things, subservient to men, causes of family problems, fit for domestic rather than professional and career roles, lazy and dependent on men, etc.

In contrast to how women are portrayed, the men are considered as the super heroes, who must be there for the women to rely on for everything the family needs. This is consistent with 16.7% responses that men are portrayed as bread winners. In all, there is an overwhelming response from Table 1 that men and women are represented in sexist roles that women are

Table 2. Achieving Beauty Standards

How to achieve set beauty standards	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Through excessive exercises	26	13.6
Through plastic surgery and dieting	17	8.9
Through cosmetics and other weight control methods	53	27.8
All of the above	95	49.7
None of the above	-	-
Total	191	100

Table 3. Accepted Beauty Standards

Reasons for accepting ad beauty standards	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Women must be beautiful to be acceptable	24	12.6
A woman's looks determine her success in life	64	33.5
All of the above	82	42.9
None of the above	21	10.10
Total	191	100

expected to adhere to or face discrimination from society.

A consistent image in advertisement is that of the thin, young, spotless and provocatively dress and poised figures of models. This is often considered the beauty set standards that every woman is expected to strive to attain. Nigerian women who were once upon a time considered beautiful depending on how robust and excess fat they have on their bodies now consider thinness and other accessories presented by the mass media as the ideal beauty. This is evidenced from Table 2 with 49.7% affirming that women can achieve the set beauty standards in the media through excessive exercise, plastic surgery and dieting, through cosmetics and other weight control methods. This is a clear indication of dissatisfaction with the self.

Because of the way men are women are portrayed, most Nigerian women think beauty is the ultimate achievement in life for a woman. In a bid to find out why women have accepted the beauty standards of ad by working towards changing their appearances, the highest respondents representing 42.9% believed that to be acceptable, women must be beautiful and that a woman's beauty determines her success in life. Congruent with this finding is Fredrickson and Roberts (1997) assertion in their objectification theory that women to varying degrees internalize this outsider view and begin to self-objectify by treating themselves as an object to be looked at and evaluated on the basis of appearance.

To confirm the assumption that Nigerian women have deviated from their belief once upon a time that a woman's beauty lies in how fat she looks, to desiring the thin young, beauty of ad models, Table 3 shows evidence. It is obvious that the set standards of beauty have been accepted by Nigerian women as 42.9%

indicated in table 3. According to data herein table 4, women representing 82.7% agreed to their desire to look like the ad models. This without doubt results from a low self-esteem. If one is not satisfied with God-given physics, next step will be geared towards changing appearances. The inability to achieve this goal results in a depressive mood that leaves such an individual constantly angry.

Table 5 aimed to uncover the consequences emanating from striving to attain ad beauty standards. Result in the table shows the respondents representing 45.5% identifying depression, anger, negative self-consciousness as some of the resultant effects on women. Depression and anger, including a constant conscious feeling of oneself not being good enough are common ingredients resulting from a low self-esteem.

DISCUSSION

The consistent portrayal of women in stereotypical ways through the medium of advertising as sex objects to satisfy men's yearning, as mothers and care givers, kitchen managers and as fragile and unintelligent creatures who can only be saved by their male folk have left the women in Nigeria feeling worthless and only good if their physiques measure up to the standards portrayed in advertisements.

There is no doubt that playing out sex roles in advertising has negative consequences more than positive for the female folk. The finding of this study have revealed that, the greatest consequences of this sex role stereotyping for Nigerian women is the problem of low self-esteem. Most of the female students sampled for this

Table 4. The Desire to look like Advertising Models

Desire to look like ad models	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Yes	158	82.7
No	33	17.3
Total	191	100

Table 5. The Consequences of not attaining set beauty standards

Consequences of not attaining set beauty standards	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Depressed	33	17.3
Angry	19	9.9
Self-conscious	52	27.2
All of the above	87	45.5
Total	191	100

study attest to the fact that, they will rather look like the ad models if the opportunity provides itself. This is a clear case of low self-esteem. This finding is in line with Vonderen and Kinnally (2012) observation that low self-esteem can have a strong association with body dissatisfaction if women are comparing themselves to the thin body ideal that is so prevalent in media .

A self-esteem that is not positive can also result in self-infliction. For instance, most of the female students sampled supported this assertion in that, they can go to any extent including compulsory fasting, taking of bitter herbs and even going through surgical procedures to alter their appearance and attain the acceptable standards as portrayed in the media.

This attitude towards the self can also lead to dire consequences such as depression and anger, which in some cases may result to suicidal thoughts. It is thus not surprising that women sampled complained of depression, anger and a self-conscious feeling that leaves them feeling undesirable and therefore worthless because of their inability to achieve their role as prescribed by the media. Needless to stress that the inability of some young women to alter their bodies to attain acceptable standards can cause the individual to feel unworthy to society. Once, she feels that, she is not good enough to win a man's interest, there is no reason to live. Also there are the health consequences such as depression, mental instability and so on. The earlier mentioned views are clear indication that advertising is a culprit on how they portray women and the value women attach to themselves.

CONCLUSION

This study couched in the objectification theory by Fredrickson and Roberts (1997) has contributed to other scholars findings that a relationship exists between how

women are portrayed in advertisements and the effect of such portrayal on the self-esteem of women. It is clear from the discourse and findings from respondents of this study that, because of the way sex stereotypes are presented in advertisements- as unintelligent or intelligent, as superior and inferior, as weak and strong etc., most women strive to meet the standards as defined in advertisements with failure resulting in devaluing the self-low self-esteem.

RECOMMENDATIONS

There is need for competent authorities like government to promote a balanced participation of both women and men in production bodies, administrative bodies and decision-making posts. It is not enough that government of the world are propagating for women emancipations and Nigeria as a nation is calling for 35% affirmative action for women, it is time to take action and ensure that women-friendly policies are established and culprits of women unfair representation are brought to book.

Women bodies fighting the cause of women in the society should engage in intensive campaign towards the need for women to value themselves and reject any form of manipulation and intimidation from advertisements to devalue them. This campaign could include the encouragement of women to strive and own Medias of advertisement as well as take position of managerial position in advertising agencies in order to ensure the balance representation of women based on what is obtainable in reality. Both advertising agencies and the mass media should promote the study, creation and formulation of new ideas to reflect the diversity of the roles of women and men in order to ensure recognition of the negative effects which stereotypes based on sex may have on the physical and mental health of the public in general and of young people in particular. The school

curriculum should be designed in such a way that at both the elementary and tertiary institutions, there are courses engaging the students on the relevance of both sexes in the development of a society. This should help both boys and girls from a tender age understand that both sexes have equal potentials if given a level playing ground.

From the point earlier mentioned, it is also vital to recommend that the family has a great role to play in narrowing the gap in gender segmentation. The family is the first point of socialization for the child. Therefore, how both boys and girls are brought up within the family will determine how they each view the role to be played by the other. If girls are thought to recognise their intellectual potentials as well as encouraged to use such potentials for the building of the society and the boys are thought to see same in the girl child, the world will be a better place. The girl will therefore not see herself as only sex object for men but possess a high self-esteem that will give them courage to take the world by the horns.

Conflict of interests

The author has not declared any conflict of interests.

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Full Length Research Paper

Influencing factors to mobile phone adoption among urban youth in Botswana

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Drawing from the focus groups and semi-structured interviews conducted on urban youth in Botswana, this study adds to the literature of mobile phone adoption among youth in the global South. The study indicates that mobile phone adoption among youth in Botswana is predominantly influenced by factors such as the need for connectedness, cost and perceived usefulness of mobile phone handsets. Moreover, this study demonstrates that acquisition of mobile phones among youth is an ongoing process, as it involves a young person starting to acquire and use a mobile phone (initial adoption), and then developing a strong link with the device through continuous consumption. This paper goes on to argue that although mobile phones are global technology, in each region young people's adoption of the devices is shaped by their traditional lifestyles, as well as the socio-economic challenges that they face.

Key words: Adoption, Botswana, influence, mobile phones, youth, challenges.

INTRODUCTION

Mobile telephony has diffused dramatically in various countries over the past two decades. Reports indicate that many people in both the economically developed and developing worlds have access to mobile phones (Kalba, 2008; Teo and Pok, 2003). Studies reveal that youth in countries such as the USA, Japan, Norway, Sweden and Australia own and use mobile phones (Axelsson, 2010; Bond, 2010; Goggin, 2013; Ling, 2004; Skog, 2001).

Also, Kalba (2008) notes the following with regard to the global South nations, "mobile adoption has occurred on a widespread basis in the past few years in India, Africa and other low-income markets". Other empirical studies also report high mobile telephony penetration rates in sub-Saharan Africa (Chabossou et al., 2009;

Donner, 2008; Duncan, 2013; Duncombe and Boateng, 2009; Hahn and Kibora, 2008; Sife et al., 2010), in Jamaica, Colombia and El Salvador (James, 2012), and in Taiwan (Chu et al., 2009; Tsai, 2012).

In countries such as Malaysia, there are reports of high penetration of mobile phones such that the total number of subscribers out numbers the country's population (Karim et al., 2009). Due to this exponential growth of mobile telephony globally, more studies concerned with youth's adoption of mobile phones in various countries, especially from the global South are overdue. This is because the literature that considers issues about mobile phone adoption among youth is deficient, and little that is present either focuses predominantly on youth in the

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global North, or is concerned with the facilitating factors to diffusion of mobile telephony. Nonetheless, while patterns of diffusion and the acceptance of mobile telephony in various countries is a strong indication that there is a high penetration of mobile communication and accessibility to mobile phones and related products nationwide, this by itself does not provide a complete explanation for mobile phone adoption among youth in the global South.

Therefore, this study adds to the already existing literature as it explores mobile phone adoption among young people in the global South. Specifically, the focus of this study is on factors that influence urban youth in Botswana to adopt mobile phones.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Research indicates that youth in various regions have adopted the mobile phone because of its accessibility, portability, micro-coordination, entertainment, multimedia features and other information sharing possibilities (Ling, 2004). During mobile phone adoption young people also find the devices to be multi-purposive, friendly to use and relatively affordable (Haddon, 2008; Lull, 2001; Miyaki, 2006). It was reported that youth in Gloucestershire adopted the mobile phone because of its attractiveness, such as for fashion and its emancipation aspects (Davie et al., 2004).

As part of this, the handsets that appealed most strongly to young people, such as the ones that offered them opportunities for accessing the Internet, were quickly adopted. In a study conducted at a Dutch university, it was revealed that the students there adopted the mobile phone because of its practical benefits, which included being always connected and being able to communicate more quickly while on the move (Peters and Allouch, 2005). In Norway, it was found that teenagers adopted mobile phones that they could afford (Ling and Helmersen, 2000).

Roberts and Pick (2008) also note that in adopting the mobile phone, youth in middle and high income countries consider factors such as the ability of the device to function with ease and connect to the World Wide Web. For instance, in South Korea, young people prefer to use mobile phones with technological functions such as web connectivity, a digital camera, and the ability to play music and games (Leung and Wei, 2000). Similar findings are reported in Australia, where young people in Melbourne and Sydney adopt a mobile phone because of its ability to offer enhanced multimedia services such as connectivity to the web (Carroll et al., 2003). According to Carroll et al. (2003), when young people in Australia set out to acquire a new mobile phone they look for the most appealing handsets, and the services that cost the least and are easily manageable.

In a study from Singapore, it was reported that mobile

phone users, including youth consider social factors such as the uses and appearances of mobile phones as the main factors that influence their adoption (Teo and Pok, 2003). Pagani (2004) found that youth in Italy and the USA considered a number of factors during their adoption of mobile multimedia services, including mobile phones and these included: perceived usefulness, perceived ease of use, cost and speed of the network service. It has also been reported that mass adoption of 3G mobile phones amongst a study of users in Taiwan, who included youth, was connected to the perceived utility of a new technology, the perceived utility of a new service and the perceived utility of a new handset (Teng et al., 2009). Clearly, the literature cited earlier suggests significant contrasts in the ways that youth in various countries adopt mobile phones, including the reasons for doing so.

Research conducted in the global South also presents varied and similar findings to those in the global North. For example, in a study conducted among youth aged between eighteen and thirty-five in South Africa, it was found that the most prevalent factors considered by youth during mobile phone adoption were perceived ease of use for those who were technologically savvy, actual usage for most of the participants, and technological advancement for those who had owned a mobile phone before (van Biljon and Kotze', 2007). In other African rural communities such as in Rwanda, the sharing of mobile phones in a household setting comprising members of the same family or close relatives is reported because in most cases the devices were considered expensive for individual ownership (Donner, 2008).

This sharing of a mobile phone handset by several members in a household as indicated in Donner's (2008) study, is associated with the lack of income for each individual to buy a mobile phone. In Burkina Faso, where mobile phones are also considered expensive to purchase, those that cannot afford them have options to buy cheap low-end and used mobile phones that are imported from France and the United Arab Emirates (Hahn and Kibora, 2008). Other researchers such as Meso et al. (2005) point to accessibility and reliability of mobile phone handsets as the main factors that influence the adoption of the devices by users in countries such as Kenya and Nigeria.

Generally, the literature noted in this section points to three distinctive categories of factors that influence mobile phone adoption amongst youth, these being the personal, demographic, and facilitating factors. The personal factors include preferences, personal gratifications, image, fashion and usage. The demographic factors include income, gender and age; and the facilitating factors include life conditions connected to socio-economic contexts such as access to network signals, and access to network service. Whereas both the personal and demographic factors are mainly identifiable in studies conducted in the global North such as in

Australia (Carroll et al., 2003), Italy, USA (Pagani, 2004) and Singapore (Teo and Pok, 2003), facilitating factors are prevalent in the global South such as in Rwanda (Donner, 2005), Burkina Faso (Hahn and Kibora, 2008) and South Africa (van Biljon and Kotze', 2008).

Nevertheless, Donner (2008) notes that despite these factors, youth in global South region regard the adoption and use of mobile phones as critically significant in their lives. This indicates that to reconstitute the study understanding of young people's interaction with mobile phones, more studies are needed from under-researched societies where youth's life styles are inextricably linked with distinct local cultures and socio-economic challenges. In particular, urban youth in Botswana offer an interesting case for study because their lives are supported by traditional values and principles entrenched in the Setswana custom (Mogapi, 1992).

Moreover, the lives of youth in Botswana are impacted by unique socio-economic challenges such as unemployment (Siphambe, 2003), crime (Balogi, 2004) and poverty (Greener et al., 2000), most of which are specific to young people in the global South.

Research question

The overarching aim of this study is to investigate the adoption the factors that influence mobile phone adoption among urban youth in Botswana. During the course of this article, the focus is on the traditional lifestyles and socio-economic circumstances of youth to examine how these have influence the need for youth to adopt mobile phones. The specific objectives of the study are as follows:

1. To consider mobile phone adoption among urban youth in Botswana.
2. To identify the factors that influence mobile phone adoption among urban youth in Botswana.

To achieve these aim and objectives, this study sought answers to the following research question:

RQ: What factors influence mobile phone adoption among urban youth in Botswana?

METHODOLOGY

This study is qualitative and its nature is exploratory. Methods of data collection included semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions. The participants for the study included urban youth aged between eighteen and twenty-five who lived in Francistown and Gaborone. Students and non-students who were randomly targeted at shopping malls and local colleges were included, and then invited to participate in the study. The decision to focus this study on youth is based on the fact that youth constitutes a transitional stage between teenage and adulthood. As such, research of the adoption of mobile phones among youth in

Botswana can provide an insight into the adoption of mobile phones in Botswana by the general population.

In each city, stratified sampling was done to obtain the final thirty participants who owned and used a mobile phone. Ideally, the strata groups were meant to ensure that there was equal representation of males and females, a spread between the ages of eighteen and twenty-five, and a combination of students and non-student participants. One focus group discussion was held with ten participants in each of the two cities, and the remaining ten participants were invited to participate in semi-structured interviews. Both the focus groups and semi-structured interviews were audio recorded and latter transcribed. Questions asked during interviews sought to investigate issues around mobile phone adoption in the contexts of Botswana youth such as, factors that influence them to adopt the devices, their interactive relationship with the devices as well as their consumption of the devices.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Although mobile phone adoption is primarily influenced by the need for connectedness, there are other factors that shape the adoption process among youth. According to van Biljon and Kotze` (2007), who studied mobile phone adoption among youth in South Africa, other factors such as social influence and gender are identified as important elements that influence mobile phone adoption by youth in South Africa. The current study reveals that, in the context of Botswana youth, there are primarily two types of mobile phone adoption: initial adoption and continuous adoption. During initial adoption, young people are normally enthusiastic about the consumption of the mobile phone, such as its basic function, as demonstrated in the section above, to offer them broad connections with other users. Factors such as the need for connectedness and income play a significant role in determining mobile phone adoption at this stage. Continuous mobile phone adoption involves users acquiring more than one handset or replacing a damaged, old or stolen handset with a newer or advanced one. Often, this is dependent upon the new ways in which the user perceives or makes sense of the functionality of the device. At this stage, the factors such as social influence and perceived usefulness of the device play a significant role in motivating young people to continuously adopt a mobile phone.

The need for connectedness as an integral motive for mobile phone adoption

Essentially, the factors that influence and shape youth adoption of mobile phones are important indicators in the adoption process. According to Caron and Caronia (2007), factors such as the relationship between the user and technology, and the functional role that the technology plays in the user's usual routine are of considerable pertinence in the adoption process. During the study, young people in Botswana indicated that overall, the need for connectedness was the integral

motive that influenced mobile phone adoption in their lives. Clearly, among youth in Botswana, a specific driver for the uptake of mobile phones was grounded in their local cultural customs related to connectedness among families, relatives and associates. In this regard, the specific examples of connectedness which were mentioned by youth participants and their parents in the study were as follows: young people connecting with their family and relatives for social support; adolescents connecting with their aunts and uncles for advice on issues of adulthood such as relationships; students connecting with their classmates in colleges for assistance on issues that pertain to studying; and young people in the workplaces connecting with their colleagues and customers on matters related to their businesses.

In particular, young people in Botswana are raised in traditional lifestyles that require them to always connect with their families, relatives and other people in their communities. Despite this, and as part of their contemporary lifestyles young people must often live apart from their loved ones due to the need to migrate to the towns and large villages to undertake new occupations such as attending secondary school, attending college and university, and taking up employment. Because of the distance between them and their loved ones, there is a need to re-establish their traditional values and principles of linking up, checking on and taking care of each other, from time to time. Also, as part of their new lifestyles in the towns and large villages, they make new connections with other people who they sometimes need to contact. As this study has revealed, in most cases the mobile phone has become the most significant device to facilitate these connections. In this regard, young people in Botswana celebrated the relevance of the mobile phone for connection through personalised communication such as voice calls, text messaging and mobile online social networks.

Consider the following extract that came out during an interview with Refilwe¹ (22), when she revealed the benefit of adopting the mobile phone to connect with her mother and daughter:

I come from Maun, where my one-year-old daughter lives with my mother. Since Maun is about 900 kilometres from Gaborone where I stay, it has been difficult for me to travel there every week. Nonetheless, I have bought my mother a mobile so that sometimes I may call her from it to check on my daughter. Especially as my mother does not have a fulltime paid job and doesn't have money to buy airtime, she usually sends me text messages to update me about my baby's wellbeing.

Some of the young people stayed far away from their parents and grandparents such that it was costly to visit them. According to the participants in the study, they thus

found solace in the mobile phone. This is illustrated in the following accounts offered by two young people during the study:

My father and mother live alone at the farms where there are no facilities such as shops, clinics and landline fixed telephones. However, the mobile network signal is adequate there. As a result, I bought them a mobile phone so that we can always be connected (Neo, 24, female).

I bought myself a mobile because I wanted to be connected with my relatives and friends who live in Jwaneng (Jwaneng is located about 600 kilometres from Francistown where he lived and worked) (Joel, 25, male).

As indicated in the findings, at some point in life young people in Botswana migrate to towns where there are many opportunities for better livelihoods. Also, as part of their traditional upbringing, it is expected that once they arrive there, and when they find jobs they should support their families. This involves taking care of their parents and grand parents, and occasionally checking on them. It is traditionally held that embracing Setswana traditional values guarantees young people long life, as well as strong affection and favour with their relatives (Makgeng, 2000; Mogapi, 1992). Hence, for many youth in Botswana, the mobile phone serve as the most appropriate device that help them re-ensconce their traditional way of life, especially in situations when their modern livelihoods compel them to live separately from their family and relatives.

Influence of income on young people's adoption of mobile phones

During the study, disparities were observed with regard to the type of devices that non-student participants owned compared to student participants. Most of the non-student participants owned smart phones, such as Blackberry, Sony Xperia and Nokia Lumia, while a majority of student participants owned simple, cheaper models and others used counterfeit² smart phone devices. As the study pointed out earlier, the interviews with the non-student participants revealed that they received the smart phones from their workplaces, and these were useful to help them perform daily tasks at their workplaces, such as accessing emails during and after work.

1. All the participants cited in this article were given pseudonyms as was agreed with them during the study that their identities will not be revealed in publications that came out from the study.

2. Counterfeit smart phones are faked brands that are commonly found in some shops in Botswana that sell imported products from overseas countries, especially China. Most of these devices are often not certified through international standards. Although counterfeit devices are considerably cheaper than original brands, and many young people in Botswana use them, they are often not certified according to international standards, and are considered by young people as undependable and hazardous to health.

Interviews with student participants revealed that they kept to cheaper handsets that were useful for basic mobile communication since they could not afford to buy expensive ones. This is because they received little stipend from their academic sponsors. Consider the following remarks that came out during interviews:

I am not satisfied with my mobile, but I don't have a choice since I don't have money to buy a smart phone. My mobile is simple and doesn't have many features. However, I intend to buy myself a Blackberry once I get a job after I complete my studies (Kefilwe, 20, female, Francistown).

Smart phones are expensive yet one needs to perpetually buy and load airtime to keep their mobiles functional. So, I feel that it is best I keep to a basic phone so that I can save money to buy prepaid airtime to recharge it at times. It may be cheap but it is still useful (Ofentse, 18, male, Francistown).

During the focus groups, other student-participants pointed out that used and counterfeit smart phone handsets are more costly (they cost around US\$300) than basic mobile phone handsets sold in many stores in Botswana. Consequently, the student participants who used counterfeit smartphones concurred that they had saved for them for several months from their stipends.

The viewpoints of participants in the study suggest that the choices regarding the type of mobile phone handset that each young person owned and used was dependent on the amount of income. Mostly, youth in Botswana who have income support, such as from workplaces (non-student participants), and those who have access to a stipend from academic sponsors (such as student participants), adopted smart phones whereas those who do not have such privileges adopted basic mobile phones.

Social influence and perceived usefulness of mobile phones as motivating factors during mobile phone adoption

During the study fieldwork, twelve student participants in the study admitted to swapping simple and cheaper mobile phones that they had initially bought when they received their first stipend to a more advanced handset. According to the participants, when they saw other people with smart phone handsets with digital cameras and advanced features for playing music, their attitude towards basic mobile phone handsets changed, since they now started to envy advanced handsets. Although the participants lamented that swapping a basic brand for a smart phone was costly, it appeared that at this stage the social influence of others surpassed the cost of acquiring the latest handset or a smart phone device. For

instance, Nay (22), a third year university student had a Samsung Galaxy S4. It cost \$600, almost the price of a laptop computer. He managed to buy this phone after saving for about seven months from his stipend. Nay admitted that before he bought this phone, he admired a similar smartphone that his uncle, who has a high paying job, used. Six other young people in Botswana also pointed out how they were persuaded to buy their smart phones after seeing advertisements about them and their functionality. Consider the following excerpts from focus group interviews:

I once owned a simple Nokia handset. I considered it nice and unique. However, after realizing that most of my friends owned smartphones that can play music and take photos, I bought myself a Blackberry Bold (Mpho, 24, female, Francistown).

My first mobile was a Nokia 5100, but last month I bought myself a Samsung Galaxy Pocket after seeing it on the shop shelf some weeks before. It looks fashionable and my friends envy it (Thero, 21, male, Gaborone).

In addition to social influence towards adopting specific mobile phone handsets, Mpho and Thero's remarks also demonstrate that the significance of mobile phones to young people in Botswana also includes a more illustrative interactive relationship between the user and peers. To some degree, this indicates that other users, such as the early adopters of the mobile phones, influence the adoption of latest handsets among some sections of youth in Botswana.

This study also revealed that many young people in Botswana related their mobile phone adoption to the context of how they wanted to use the devices. The interviews with young people revealed that they all wanted to own devices that were useful for various forms of mobile media and communication services. These included making voice calls, sending and receiving text messages, conducting social networking, accessing mobile Internet, exchanging digital photographs and videos, and playing mobile games. Consider the following remarks that came out during semi-structured interviews with some young people in this study:

Unlike my previous mobile phones, my new Samsung Galaxy S4 is useful to access Facebook, Skype, MP3 music, videos and the Internet. I access and check online updates for my online classes and also research through Google (Nay, male, Gaborone).

Although I first owned a simple Nokia 1280 to connect to my family at home, I acquired this S3 mini because I wanted a handset that could also connect me with my friends overseas through social networks (Gorata, 19, female, Gaborone).

While also discussing this with participants during the

study, the students pointed out that the counterfeit smartphones were useful for them to access mobile Internet, because access to fixed Internet was often inadequate in their school premises. The Internet accessed through mobile handsets was useful as part of their studies.

CONCLUSION

Overall, this study has sought to explore the factors that influence mobile phone adoption among urban youth in Botswana. The findings of this study have indicated that there are similarities and differences in the way that urban youth in Botswana, and their counterparts in other countries, adopt and consume mobile phones.

Specifically, this study demonstrated that for urban youth in Botswana the need for connectedness and income were the most predominant influential factors during mobile phone adoption among youth. Other factors such as perceived usefulness and attractiveness of the device were secondary; as these were only considered during continuous adoption, particularly after a young person has already owned his or her first mobile phone handset and considered changing to a different one. Analogous to the practices of youth in the economically developed countries, such as the UK (Davie et al., 2004), Italy and the USA (Pagani, 2004) mobile phone adoption and consumption among youth in Botswana has been influenced by the perceived usefulness of the handsets.

As is the case with other young people in Singapore (Teo and Pok, 2003), South Korea (Leung and Wei, 2000) and Australia (Carroll et al., 2003), young people in Botswana have strategically adopted smartphones through which they access mobile Internet. Nonetheless, in the context of Botswana youth mobile phone adoption in this regard occurs due to both the lack of income to buy computer devices to access the Internet, as well as inaccessibility of the Internet in their homes and colleges. The significance of income as demonstrated in this study underscores the viewpoint by Ling and Helmersen (2000) that young people adopt mobile phones that they can afford. One very distinct finding from this study is the influence of cultural lifestyle to mobile phone adoption. As this study has shown, the need to connect has been motivated by the requirements to uphold the traditional values and principles in Setswana culture, whereas a lack of income is due to the challenges of poverty and unemployment. Clearly then, in each society mobile phone adoption among youth is primarily associated with young people's traditional lifestyles and the socio-economic challenges that they face. No doubt this underscores the significance to undertake other related studies to include many participants from various cultural backgrounds. Conceivably, such studies could yield varied results which can also inform and reshape our understanding of mobile phone adoption among youth globally.

Conflict of interests

The author has not declared any conflict of interests.

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The background of the entire page is a dark, rounded rectangle. It features a blurred image of a hand holding a smartphone. A large, semi-transparent microphone icon is overlaid on the right side of the image. The text is centered and white, with the main title in a larger font size than the subtitle.

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