

# Guinness Stout Billboard Advertisement and Gender Representation: Views of Media Practitioners in Anambra State, Nigeria

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## Abstract

The study investigates Guinness Stout billboard advertisement (come and drink at the table of men) and gender representation. The study, among other objectives, seeks to: ascertain the extent of gender neutrality of Guinness Stout billboard advertisement and to assess gender discriminatory elements in the advertisement. The constructivism and standpoint theories were used as theoretical framework for the study. Quantitative research method was adopted while the questionnaire was used as an instrument of data collection. The findings show that media practitioners in Anambra state are very much exposed to the Guinness Stout billboard advertisement. Findings further show that their exposure is predicated on the many billboards of the advertisement hoisted in several areas in the major towns and cities in Anambra State, in particular and Nigeria, in general. Findings also show that Guinness Stout advertisement is not gender neutral as the advertisement discriminates against the female gender. The findings further show that the gender discriminatory elements inherent in the Guinness Stout advertisement could be found in the choice of words of the advertisement, the images used in the advertisement and the presentation of the product. Based on the findings, the paper therefore concludes that the Guinness Stout advertisement is not neutral, but gender bias; the advertisement discriminates and marginalises the female gender. The paper therefore, among others, recommends that Advertising Practitioners Council of Nigeria (APCON) should always ensure that advertisement approved for public consumption in Nigeria uses gender sensitive images and words, particularly in billboard advertisements.

**Keywords:** Guinness Stout, Billboard, Advertisement, Media, Practitioners and Anambra State.

## Introduction and Problem Statement

The power of advertising is in its ability to manipulate people, turning them into unconscious and addicted consumers, while they continue to deny that they could ever be affected by the messages of such positive brands. Through even the most insipid of advertising, we are affected by the subconscious power of the image and representations of people in situations start to suggest how we could and should model ourselves (Onyejekwe, 2005). Advertising is a significant agent of socialisation in modern industrialised societies and is used as a tool to maintain certain social constructions, such as gender. Men and women are depicted as differing in attitudes, behaviour and social statuses. These differences are what separate the sexes into different genders. Gender advertisements give the viewers a glimpse into a world laden with socially defined and constructed gender relations, displays and roles. These images are crafted to mimic real life and many mistake the concepts of fantasy and reality in regards to advertising. Advertisements do not look strange to us, when they should. Advertisements take something that exists already in the world and they change it, forming a distorted reflection. They emphasise some things and de-emphasise others, it is a hyper ritualisation of the world and we recognise and even relate with some of the images. Men and women are portrayed in advertisements according to the constructed definition of femininity and masculinity. To be a woman is to be feminine and to be a man is to be masculine. There is little room for variation or a reversal of roles, except within the smaller frame of niche marketing. In advertising, men are often portrayed in the following ways: alert and conscious of surroundings, standing upright, eyes open and looking around, bodies are controlled, mean expression on face, gripping things tightly with hands, hands in pockets, serious and physically active while women are portrayed in advertising as: touching self, caressing an object, lying on the floor, sitting on a bed or chair, eyes closed, not alert, confused, vulnerable, body contorted, dressed like a child, holding an object or a man for support, sexy and sexually available, seductive, playful and careless.

Advertising is one of the most important marketing activities often utilised by business organisations the world over to draw attention to the products or services they make available. Advertising plays a major role involving a number of relationships, which are created around the object, person, symbolism, power and

satisfaction; in this light, advertisement articulates meaning by careful manipulation of words and images to create the desired effect. Advertising is a paid form of non-personal presentation or promotion of ideas, goods or services by an identified sponsor with a view to disseminating information concerning an idea product or service. The message which is presented or disseminated is called advertisement (Puranik, 2011 cited in Edegoh, Nwanolue and Eze, 2013). Asemah (2011) sees advertising as the process of creating awareness about goods, ideas, products and services. Thus, every organisation that wants its products to be known has to create awareness through advertising; it is important to keep in mind that the advertisements we see and hear are end products of series of investigations, strategic planning, tactical decisions and executions, which together comprises the total advertising process (Anyancho, 2007). The nature and competitiveness of modern business necessitated that every business organisation should carry out advertisement on regular basis.

Advertising is any communication that is paid for, identified by a sponsor, directed at a target audience, through the various mass media like radio, television, billboard, newspaper and magazine with the aim of creating awareness about goods and services (Asemah, Edegoh and Ojih, 2013). Arens (2008, p.7) defines advertising as a structured and composed non-personal communication of information, usually persuasive in nature, about products, services and ideas by identified sponsors through various mass media. This definition by Arens appears to have benefited immensely from Dominick's (2007, p.321) earlier definition which avers that advertising is any form of non personal presentation and promotion of ideas, goods and services, usually paid for by identified sponsor. Advertising is a controlled, identifiable and persuasive communication that is presented via the mass media and designed to develop product demand and to create a company's image (Edegoh, Asemah and Ezebuenyi, 2013). Advertising aims at promoting the sales of a product or service and also, to inform the masses about the highlights of the product or the service features. This explains why Edegoh and Asogwa (2013) correctly note that the primary goal of advertising is to convince the target audience to adopt an idea or patronise a product or service. Advertising utilises different media to reach out to the masses and uses different types of appeals to connect to the customers across the globe. Wikipedia (2011), cited in Asemah (2011) gave a comprehensive definition of advertising thus:

Advertising is the process of persuading potential customers to buy products or promote its services. It is the branch of marketing that deals with communicating to customers about products, brands and services. Advertising is a form of communication used to persuade an audience (viewers, readers or listeners) to take some action with respect to products, ideas or services. Most commonly, the desired result is to drive consumer behaviour with respect to a commercial offering, although political and ideological advertising is also common. Advertising messages are usually paid-for by sponsors and viewed via various traditional media, including mass media such as newspapers, magazines, television commercials, radio advertisements, outdoor advertising or direct mail or new media, such as websites and text messages.

The foregoing therefore implies that advertising is the process of persuading potential customers to buy products or promote its services and this persuasion takes place through advertising channels or media. Advertising media refer to channels or vehicles through which advertising messages are passed to the audience. These include the print: newspaper, magazine, handbill, etc.; the electronic: radio, television, Internet; and the outdoor media such as billboard. As an outdoor medium of advertising, billboard is targeted at a mobile audience. Billboard is a reminder medium used to reinforce recall of brand names and payoffs. It can be used to reach most classes and categories of target consumers (Edegoh and Asogwa, 2013).

Guinness Nigeria, the second largest Guinness market worldwide and the number one in Africa, is one of the largest and economic viable business organizations in Nigeria. The organisation's brands in Nigeria are Foreign Extra Stout, Smirnoff ice, Harp larger, Satzenbrau Pilsner Larger, Gordon's Spark, Malta Guinness, Guinness Extra Smooth and Armstrong. Guinness Nigeria is noted for its many social responsibility concerns in Nigeria and has won several awards for efficient business operations and commitment to the development of Nigerian society since the 1950s. The company has several advertisements to its credit in print and electronic media as well as other media like the billboard. The latest billboard advertisement of the organisation is the focus of the study.

Recently, Guinness Stout came up with billboard advertisement with bold inscription "Come and drink at the table of men". This advertisement showcases a number of people and a large table full of bottles of stout and the billboard is hoisted in strategic places in most cities in Nigeria. It has been argued that advertising reinforces discrimination and marginalisation of women and upholds stereotype in role as created by male-dominated world in its treatment of gender (Belknap, 2009, Asemah, Edegoh and Ojih, 2013). Gender is perhaps the basic category we use for sorting human beings, and it is a key issue when discussing representation. Essential elements of our own identity, and the identities we assume other people to have, come from concepts of gender - what does it mean to be a boy or a girl? Many objects, not just humans, are represented by the media

as being particularly masculine or feminine, particularly in advertising and we grow up with an awareness of what constitutes appropriate characteristics for each gender. Thus, advertising has been accused of contributing to women's relegation to the background, assigning them a place in the kitchen, ascribing to them a posture to be seen and not heard and generally making women tools for just the advancement of the cause of men. Against this background, the study assesses Guinness Stout billboard advertisement and uses the opinion of media practitioners in Anambra State as basis of the evaluation.

### **Objectives of the Study**

The objectives of the study are as follows:

- i. To ascertain the level of exposure of media practitioners in Anambra State to Guinness Stout billboard advertisement;
- ii. To find out the extent of gender neutrality of the advertisement;
- iii. To determine gender discriminatory elements in the advertisement; and
- iv. To ascertain the views of the media practitioners in Anambra State on possible reasons for gender discrimination in the advertisement.

### **Research Questions**

The following questions are posed for investigation in pursuance of the study's objectives:

- i. What is the level of exposure of media practitioners in Anambra State to Guinness Stout billboard advertisement?
- ii. What is the extent of gender neutrality of the advertisement?
- iii. What are the gender discriminatory elements in the advertisement?
- iv. What are the views of the media Practitioners on possible reasons for gender discrimination in the advertisement?

### **Review of Related Literature**

Advertising is crucial to growth and development of business as it performs several functions. These functions according to Asemah (2011) cited in Asemah, Edegoh and Ojih, 2013, p.28) include, but are not limited to the following:

- (a) It serves marketing function by helping companies that provide products or services to sell their products. Advertising works with other forms of marketing communication like personal selling, sales promotion, direct marketing, etc., to sell ideas, goods and services.
- (b) Advertising induces the firms cost of production per unit output. This is because advertising increase demand for the firm's output, thereby, encouraging manufacturers to manufacture more products.
- (c) Advertising makes the public to be loyal to a product.
- (d) Through advertising, companies that are new in business can easily penetrate the market. Advertising is pro-competitive. Thus, it helps the new organisations with a new product or service to take on the giants in the industry and carve out a niche for itself in the market.
- (e) Advertising inform the consumers about products in the market. This will enable the consumers to make more intelligent choices in the market place.
- (f) Advertising increases usage of product.
- (g) Advertising directs the public to areas where they can get products
- (h) Advertising helps the public to identify products and differentiate them from others.  
In his own contribution, Anyacho (2007, p.9 cited in Edegoh and Asemah, 2013) avers that most commercial oriented companies advertise to achieve the following results:
  - (i) Create awareness for new products. This helps to expose the brand and the uniqueness of the product.
  - (ii) Sustain interests and helps to alleviate cognitive dissonance by constantly reinforcing the unique qualities of the product and services.
  - (iii) Fight competition to secure the desired market share.
  - (iv) Increase profit, thereby ensuring the continued life of the business.
  - (v) Increase sales turn over.
  - (vi) Induce higher production volume resulting from increase in demand.
  - (vii) Get more efficient in the utilisation of resources as a result of increase in profitability.
  - (viii) Invest in research and development.
  - (ix) Lower prices and get more competitive.
  - (x) Expansion of market.

Billboard is a branch of outdoor media usually targeted at passers-by, drivers, those in moving vehicle and pedestrian traffic; and usually characterised by attractive models, images and catchy slogans that attract

attention (Edegoh, Nwanolue and Eze, 2013). Duncan (2013) notes that billboards take two forms; the most common definition of a billboard is an outdoor sign or poster you usually see on freeways, highways, and streets. A billboard is also an announcement of a sponsor or sponsors at the beginning, middle or end of a radio or television broadcast. A billboard that is an outdoor sign or poster is also known as outdoor advertising. Wise GEEK (2013) opines that billboard advertising involves use of large signs along roadways to advertise a wide range of products, services and causes. The source further explains that the signs used in the roadside advertising campaigns must be over a certain size in order to be truly referred to as a billboard. In general, the sign must be large enough for a driver or passenger in a vehicle to be able to clearly read the lettering while navigating the vehicle along a road.

Billboard are large format advertising displays intended for viewing from extended distance generally more than 50 feet. Billboard messages are permanent and you can expose yourself to billboard over and over again, thus, making billboard messages indelible and easily recalled by the audience (Okoro, 1998). Okoro (1998, p.77) avers that the importance of billboard includes: high visual impact, low cost, high product visibility, high frequency, and immediate message delivery. It has also been said that billboards do not only improve the visual quality of the area where they are placed, but they also serve as beautiful reminders of our past and the future; and that the most important advantage of billboard over other advertising media is that it has the potential to capture the attention of the audience on the go (Anna, 2006; Plumely, 2000, p. 13), cited in Edegoh, Nwanolue and Eze, 2013).

Several studies have revealed that women are traditionally portrayed in advertising in stereotypical roles or in ways that do not necessarily match reality. The often negative representations of women in advertising and its effect on young women is a source of concern to many researchers (Matlin, 1987, cited in Asemah, Edegoh and Ojih, 2013, p.30). It has been found that women traditionally have been overrepresented in the home and underrepresented outdoors and in business settings; that advertising presents a traditional stereotyped portrayal of women to be sex objects and house wives; and that although advertisers aim to reach all segments of the consuming public, their portrayal of society is not necessarily an accurate reflection of how society is composed (Ferrante, Haynes and Kingsley, 1988; Whipple and Courtley, 1985, p.4; Bardwick and Schumann, 1976, all cited in Asemah, Edegoh and Ojih, 2013).

Researchers have also found that stereotypes can have a negative effect on women themselves. Women may perceive the “happy housewife” stereotype as a cultural directive, which in turn, may lead them to put aside their own desires regarding career and personal life and replace them with the idea presented through popular culture, including advertisement. Advertising is a powerful tool for selling, but it can also be a powerful tool for attitude change and behaviour. Hence, the danger of advertising, which stereotypes women, is that it can lead to forming notions that undermine women and their abilities. One of the most strident criticisms of advertising is that it portrays women in an extremely narrow range of roles with depictions concentrated on the traditional occupations of housewife, a mother and secretary. It has been found that in advertising, it is usually a woman that is depicted as:

- A servant of men and children that reacts to the demands and complaints of her loved ones with a bad conscience and the promise for immediate improvement (wash, food)
- A sexual or emotional play toy for the elf affirmation of men.
- A technically totally clueless being that can only manage a child proof operation.
- Female experts, but stereotype from the fields of fashion, cosmetics, food or at the most medicine.
- As ultra thin.
- Doing ground work for others, e.g. serving coffee while a journalist interviews a politician (Wikipedia, 2013).

Consequently, a synthesis of the many accusations against advertising reveals that advertisements often present men and women in terms of power and dominion; males are always in control or in charge. Advertising depicts women as sex toys for the sexual satisfaction of men by displaying certain parts of their body in suggestive ways. The male models used in advertising are portrayed as strong independent and in control whereas the female models are presented as submissive, weak and dependent. Thus, advertising has helped to solidify the association of women and domestic roles.

The studies of Imam (2000, p.92) and William (2004) revealed that the media present dominantly negative images of women, portray ideological themes encouraging women subordination in the society; gender representations in advertisement provides powerful models of behaviour to emulate or react against; and masculine usages on advertisements typically reflects power, strength, virility, athleticism, and competitiveness while feminine images portray beauty, submissiveness, nurturance and co-operation. Thus, billboard advertisements like other media advertisements such as the television, newspaper and or magazine reflect or portray women in a very bad light, thereby, reinforcing societal marginalisation, discrimination and overall relegation of women to the background.

Research also shows that about two thirds of women feel that advertisers go too far in using sex to sell product and that explicit billboard advertisements are more offensive (Media and Gender Monitor 2002, cited in Onyejekwe, 2005). Recent French Reports also highlight the promotion of sexual values in advertisements that increasingly show degrading portrayals of women with overtones of violence, sexual domination and bestiality (Media and Gender Monitor 2002, cited in Onyejekwe, 2005). A classic example is the Barquette brand cooking cream advertisement in France that shows a headless torso of a woman with the caption "I do what I want with her" (Melanson 2001, cited in Onyejekwe, 2005). This exploitation of female sexuality in advertising, as noted by Onyejekwe (2005) has negative consequences for women. Images of thin models seen, for example, in television and magazine advertisements and good-looking muscular men appear daily in magazines, films and television. More young men are also turning to drugs, such as steroids to help build muscle strength. This unrealistic importance given to body image has been blamed for the poor self-esteem and unhappiness among ordinary people, particularly the youth (Cooper 1997, cited in Onyejekwe, 2005).

Courtney and Whipple (1974), cited Asemah, Edegoh and Ojih, (2013) studied the portrayal of women in television commercials and found significant differences between men and women. Women were over-represented in advertisements for cosmetics and were less likely to appear in advertisements for cars, trucks and related products. Seventy-five percent of all advertisements using women were for products found in the kitchen or bathroom, reinforcing the stereotype that a woman's place is in the home. Women as compared to men, were portrayed mostly in house settings, rather than business settings. Women did not make important decisions and lastly, women were depicted as dependent on men and were regarded primarily as sexual objects. Courtney and Whipple (1974) cited Asemah, Edegoh and Ojih (2013) defined sexual objects as, where women had no role in the commercial, but appeared as an item of decoration. In most advertising, women are generally portrayed as subordinate to men or merely as a decorative item.

Ferrante, Haynes and Kingsley (1988, p.231), cited in Asemah, Edegoh and Ojih (2013) 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. Ferrante, Haynes and Kingsley (1988), cited in Asemah, Edegoh and Ojih (2013) found that women traditionally have been overrepresented in the home and underrepresented outdoors and in business settings. Whipple and Courtney's (1985, p.4), cited in Asemah, Edegoh and Ojih (2013) research found that there is evidence that advertising presents a traditionally stereotyped portrayal of women and that demography and attitudes have changed dramatically over the past decade.

Advertising industry continues to serotype women to be sex objects, house wives. Advertisers are culpable for the heightened body dissatisfaction amongst women, because they constantly use sexy unrealistic images of ultra thin models, the depiction of women as sex objects and the frequent use of sex, to sell products.

Since the late 1960s, there have been concerns regarding the portrayal of women in the media. Bardwick and Schumann (1976), cited in Asemah, Edegoh and Ojih (2013) analysed the portrayal of women in commercials and concluded that to an amazing extent, women are preoccupied with dirt. Visual advertisements are bombarded with images and slogans portraying women. Lesniak (2012) however avers that there are several ethical considerations for sex and gender representation in advertising. Stereotypes for men and women are heavily used in advertising to make messages clear. For instance, a woman in the kitchen cooking a meal while the husband gets home from work is a stereotype that is often used to sell dinner items. Another ethical issue to be addressed is the "sex sells" approach. There is sex all over the media, especially in alcohol and clothing advertisements. This approach, whether it works or not, captures the attention of consumers and tries to sell the product through objectifying both genders. Lesniak (2012) however introduces ten guidelines for the best practices to address the considerations to better serve the consumers; they are:

1. **Advertisers should be aware of the goal of their advertisement:** Advertisements serve the purpose of selling a product or making the product known. Advertisements do not always have to shock people to get their attention, be aware of the foundation of the advertising message (Lesniak, 2012).
2. **Use realistic portrayals, instead of using the common stereotypes:** Some women are stay at home mothers that cook and take care of the kids while the father works. That does not mean that there are no stay at home fathers out there as well or that there are no women that work in business settings as a CEO. Using realistic portrayals will have a positive effect over using the same stereotypical messages (Lesniak, 2012).
3. **Coordinate with feminist consultants:** If the advertisement could potentially offend women, asking an outside opinion will prevent future complaints (Lesniak, 2012).
4. **Truth is greater than sex:** Sex may sell, but consumers want to know about the products ability to enhance their life. A sexy picture might capture the attention of consumers, but a purchase will be made only if the consumers think the product will benefit or meet their needs (Lesniak, 2012).

5. **Research the target audience:** It is important to clearly define where and when the message will appear. For example, a beer advertisement with a semi-naked woman might be found in Maxim magazine. If a middle-aged woman were to pick up the magazine and see the advertisement, most likely she would not be offended if she were picking up the magazine in the first place (Lesniak, 2012).
6. **Test the advertisements:** Examine the reactions of the target market and people that are not a part of the target market. This will give advertisers an idea of how the message will be received, if it is offensive and if the ad needs to be revised (Lesniak, 2012).
7. **Relevancy:** Make sure the imagery used in the advertisement matches the message of the product you are trying to sell (Lesniak, 2012).
8. **Create a unique message:** People are not going to remember another stereotypical advertisement with that woman cooking or that man in the work place. Consumers will buy something that stands out to them, not something they have already seen (Lesniak, 2012).
9. **Beauty is in the eye of the beholder:** Creating new ideas of beauty will improve society's expectations for what is beautiful and what is not (Lesniak, 2012).
10. **Empower each gender:** The main focus is woman, to diminish stereotypes. This commercial makes women the main focus and describes how "unapologetically strong" they are (Lesniak, 2012).

### Theoretical Underpinning

The importance of theory is underscored by Kaplan (1960), cited in Edegoh and Asemah, (2013): "A theory is a way of making sense out of a disturbing situation". Daramola (2003) defines communication theory as "a set of ideas which provides an explanation for communication phenomena". Thus, theories are important in explaining, clarifying and predicting the phenomenon central to any scientific research endeavour. For this reason, this study adopted two theories, namely: constructivism and standpoint theories.

Constructivism theory was formulated by Jesse Delia. The major assumption of the theory is that people who are cognitively complex in their perception of others have a communication advantage over those with less developed mental structures. These fortunate individuals have the ability to produce sophisticated messages that have the best chance to achieve their own goals. Griffin (2000, p.11) notes that the core assumption of constructivism is that persons make sense of the world through systems of personal constructs. He further observes that constructs are the cognitive templates or stencils we offer, to fit over reality to bring order out of chaos. In the same vein, Hall (2000) states that meaning is constructed by individual users of language. The underlying argument of the social constructionist theory of representation is predicated on the fact that meaning does not reside or inhere in things in the world; rather, it is fixed socially, fixed in culture: thus, it is constructed, it is produced.

The foregoing implies that as human beings, we analyse activities or events taking place in the society and interpret them, after which we will assign meaning to them. The meaning we give to such things depends on how we perceive them. Thus, we may perceive them to be bad or we perceive them to be good. In any event, it is our perception that guides the assignment of meaning. Constructivism theory centres on the categories of personality and actions that we use to define the character of another person. The theory captures how human beings are able to depict people, using a vast range of columns, shades and cues.

The theory is very relevant to the study at hand in that it talks about the way people interpret events and give them meaning; thus, the way women are portrayed in billboard advertising is based on the interpretation of their roles in the society.

The standpoint theory was propounded by Sandra Harding and Julia T. Wood (Edegoh, Asemah and Ude-Akpe, 2013). The major assumption of the theory is that our standpoint affects our world view; that the position or stance we take on certain matters affect how we view things in society. Communication generally has a frame of reference and it affects how we interpret every form of communication. In line with this thinking, Griffin (2000, p.447) notes that:

A standpoint is a place from which to view the world around us. Whatever our vantage point, its location tends to focus our attention on some features of the natural and social landscape while obscuring others. Synonyms for standpoint include viewpoint, perspective, outlook and position. Each of these words suggests a specific location in time and space, where observation takes place, while at the same time, referring to values and or attitudes.

The above assertion points to the fact that the standpoint theory mainly explains how the members of the audience differently react to media messages based on their cultural background. The world is a place where you have different culture. Thus, your culture affects how you view communication messages. Griffin (2000, p.

447) argues that the social groups within where we are located powerfully shape what we experience and know, as well as how we understand and communicate with ourselves, others and the world. This implies that religion, ethnicity, etc., affect our world view. According to Griffin (2000, p. 448) standpoint theorists suggest that we can use the inequalities of gender, race, class and sexual orientation to observe how different locations within the social hierarchy tend to generate distinct accounts of nature and social relationships. Thus what people know about themselves, others and society depends on which group they are in.

The standpoint theory also assumes that women are a marginalised group. The theorists see important differences between men and women; men tend to want autonomy while women tend to want connectedness. The standpoint theory is adequate in explaining inequality in the society and in addressing marginalisation that has often been the lot of women. Thus, in billboard advertising, women are marginalised. Most of the advertisements on billboard are done using men; it is only when they portray negative aspects that they make use of women. Sometimes, too, billboard advertisement completely excludes women even when the product, service or idea that is being advertised is used by (or is important to) both men and women.

### Methodology

The study adopted survey research method. According to Asemah, Gujbawu, Ekhareafu and Okpanachi, (2012), cited in Edegoh, Asemah and Ude-Akpeh (2013), survey is the most appropriate method of gathering and measuring data relating to demographics, attitude, opinion and perception. One hundred and twenty-five copies of structured questionnaire were distributed to media practitioners in Onitsha, Awka and Nnewi (all in Anambra State). Purposively, 50 respondents were drawn from Onitsha and Awka while 25 respondents were taken from Nnewi, giving a grand total of 125 respondents. The presentation of data that follow utilised table of frequency and adopted simple percentage method for data analysis.

### Presentation of Findings

**Table 1: Return Rate of Questionnaire**

Item	Frequency	Percentage
Returned and found usable	120	96
Not usable	3	2.4
Not returned	2	1.6
Total distributed	125	100

Table one shows that the return rate of questionnaire is 96% (n = 120) while the mortality rate is 4% (n = 5). The return rate is higher than the mortality rate. The mortality rate of 4% (n = 5) does not affect the study because it is insignificant compared to the return rate of 96%. Thus the copies were considered adequate to represent the population. The presentation and analysis of data obtained from the questionnaire was based on the one hundred and twenty (120) copies of questionnaire that were returned and found usable.

### Research Question One

**What is the level of exposure of media practitioners in Anambra State to Guinness Stout billboard advertisement?**

Responses	Frequency	Percentage
Very high	60	50
High	60	50
Low	0	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>120</b>	<b>100</b>

Table two shows the level of exposure to Guinness Stout billboard advertisement by media practitioners in Anambra State. The exposure of 50% of the practitioners (n = 60) was very high and the remaining 50% (n = 60) had “high” exposure to the advertisement. The implication of the data on table two is that media practitioners are well exposed to the advertisement being studied.

### Research Question Two

**What is the extent of gender neutrality of the advertisement?**

**Table 3: Extent of gender neutrality of the advertisement**

Responses	Frequency	Percentage
High	0	0
Low	38	32
Very low	82	68
<b>Total</b>	<b>120</b>	<b>100</b>

Table three reveals the extent of gender neutrality of the Guinness Stout billboard advertisement. Thirty-eight respondents, representing 32% said that the gender neutrality of the advertisement is low and 82 representing 68% rated the advertisement “very low” in gender neutrality. None of the respondents rated the advertisement “high” as far as gender neutrality was concerned. The import of data on table three is that the advertisement is far from being gender neutral.

### Research Question Three

What are the gender discriminatory elements in the advertisement?

Table 4: Gender discrimination elements in the advertisement

Responses	Frequency	Percentage
The words used	76	63
The images used	36	30
The presentation of the product	8	7
<b>Total</b>	<b>120</b>	<b>100</b>

Table four captures the gender discriminatory elements in Guinness Stout billboard advertisement. Respondents who stated that the major gender discriminatory elements in the advertisement centred on the words used in the ad were 63% (n = 76); those that asserted that the gender discrimination elements inherent in the ad was manifested in the images used in the advertisement were 30% (n = 36); while 7% of the respondents (n = 8) said that the advertisement was gender biased because of the manner in which it presented the product to consuming public.

### Research Question Four

What are the possible reasons for gender discrimination in the advertisement?

Table 5: Respondents’ view on possible reasons for gender discrimination in the advertisement

Responses	Frequency	Percentage
Guinness stout is men’s drink	45	37
Only a few women drink stout	20	17
It is not good to use women in alcoholic drink advertisement	25	21
Women do not drink stout	0	0
Don’t know	30	25
<b>Total</b>	<b>120</b>	<b>100</b>

Table five presents data on possible reasons why Guinness Stout advertisement contains gender discrimination among women. Thirty-seven percent of the respondents (n = 45) held the view that the reason may be because Guinness Stout is considered to be men’s drink; 17% of the respondents (n = 20) asserted that the reason may be because only a few women drink Stout; 21% (n = 25) of respondents located the reason for women discrimination in the advertisement on the fact that its is not good to use women in alcoholic drink advertisement. However, 25% of the respondents (n = 30) did not identify any reason for the advertisements’ posture on women. It is noteworthy that no respondent chose the option “women do not drink stout” because Guinness stout is not consumed by men (males) only. It is a drink for both male and female gender.

### Discussion of Findings

The findings show that media practitioners in Anambra state are very much exposed to the Guinness Stout billboard advertisement that is the basis of this study. Their exposure is predicated on the many billboards of the advertisement hoisted in several areas in the major towns and cities in Anambra State (in particular) and Nigeria (in general). The high exposure to the advertisement by media practitioners is in line with the researchers’ expectation as media practitioners are expected to be on top of issues and developments in the media world. Also, the practitioners’ high level of exposure to the advertisement is a necessary precondition for efficient professional assessment of the advertisement.

Findings further revealed that the Guinness Stout advertisement is not gender neutral. The advertisement is found to be discriminatory against the female gender. It is a gender blind advertisement which extols the virtues of men and completely overlooks the female. This finding is in line with the findings of several studies that have been reviewed in this study; thus, confirming and upholding the accusations against advertising that it has often portrayed women in negative and subserviant ways (Ferrante, Haynes and Kinsley, 1988; Whipple and Coutney, 1985; Bardwick and Schumann, 1976, cited in Asemah, Edegoh and Ojih, 2013). The finding confirms the many criticisms of advertising as being instrumental to the portrayal of men as strong, independent and always in charge (control) while at the same time presenting women as weak, dependent and submissive: presenting men as being synonymous with power, strength, virility, athleticism and competitiveness



while portraying women images in terms of beauty, submissiveness nurturance and cooperation (Imam, 2000; William, 2006). Similarly, this finding is in line with the findings of Asemah, Edegoh and Ojih (2013). The scholars in their study of “audience perception of the portrayal of women in television advertising” found out that 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. For example, when you see the advertisement of lucozade boost, a man was used and not a woman. This shows that women are portrayed as weak.

The findings further show that the gender discriminatory elements inherent in the Guinness Stout advertisement could be located in the choice of words of the advertisement, the images used or employed in the ad and the presentation of the product. The words used in the ad are, to say the least, male chauvinistic. A thoughtful look at the words used in the advertisement: “Come and drink at the table of men” reveals clearly a thoughtless negation of the cherished universal principle of gender neutrality often associated with gender advertising. The images depicted in the advertisement do not help matters as the nearly all-men images wait anxiously to pick from and drink at the so called table of men.

More so, the findings show that the possible reasons for gender discrimination in the advertisement may include, among others, that Guinness drink is men’s drink, that only a few women drink Guinness Stout and that it is not good to use women in alcoholic drink advertisement. Guinness Stout is not only consumed by men. In fact, it is known to be consumed by both men and women. This explains why no respondents chose the option: “women do not drink stout”. Although the ratio of men versus women consumers of the bitter taste stout is not known, it is a known fact that the male and female gender consumes stout in Nigeria. The basic philosophy behind alcoholic drink advertisement in most civilised societies is emphasis on responsible consumption of alcohol. To this end, there is no law forbidden the use of women in alcoholic beverage advertisement. So, the near zero representation of women in the advertisement is a clear manifestation of the utilisation of advertising to reinforce women marginalisation and discrimination in Nigeria.

## Conclusion

Based on the findings, the paper concludes that the Guinness Stout advertisement is not neutral, but gender bias; the advertisement discriminates and marginalises the female gender and should be condemned by all. Based on the findings and conclusion, the paper recommends that: Advertising Practitioners Council of Nigeria (APCON) should always ensure that advertisement approved for public consumption in Nigeria uses gender sensitive images and words, particularly in billboard advertisements; APCON should take adequate and decisive steps to ensure that the gender blind advertisement of Guinness Stout is withdrawn from circulation forthwith and the billboards removed and advertisement be modified by admitting a sizeable number of women to create a balance between the ratio of men and women in the images shown in the advertisement and by proper choice of gender neutral words such as “come and drink at the table of humans.

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