

**ADVERTISING AGENCIES OWNERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT IN NIGERIA:
WHAT IS THE LEVEL OF INVOLVEMENT OF FEMALE PROFESSIONALS?**

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The numerical strength and power of women in many sectors of the Nigerian economy are on the increase. But in Nigeria, little is known of female participation in advertising agency management. The objectives of the study are to determine the proportion of female participation in advertising agency management; the perception of female professionals on their degree of involvement in decision-making and advertising agencies' ownership; as well as investigate the extent to which female professionals are satisfied with their working environment in advertising agencies in Nigeria. A survey research design was adopted which involved the use of 18-item close- and open-ended questionnaire. Using a combination of census, purposive and convenience sampling techniques, a sample size of 110 female advertising professionals, drawn from 20 (or 26%) of the existing 78 officially registered advertising agencies in Nigeria, participated in the study. The study finds that: 76 % of the female respondents agreed that there are more male employees in advertising agencies in Nigeria compared to females; 76.4% agreed that more female employees in advertising agencies belong to the junior category; and 67% are dissatisfied with the level of female involvement in advertising agency ownership. Participants agreed that working environment in advertising agencies is friendly to female professionals. The implications of these findings for the development at the industry and national levels are presented in the discussion of findings and recommendations.

Key words: Advertising; Agency management; Agency ownership; Development; Female professionals; gender

Introduction

In the last decades, various social and economic factors, including the massive incorporation of women into the labour market, have led to changes in the roles played by men and women in modern societies. These gender roles have been reflected in many areas of everyday life, including the advertising sector. Costa (1994) defines Gender as a social construct, a dichotomy that exists in all societies. Gender refers to the socially constructed roles of and relations between men and women. It also refers to the social attributes and opportunities associated with being male or female and the relationships between women and men. These attributes, opportunities and relationships are socially constructed and are learned through socialization processes. Hence, Laninhun (2003: 72) states that, gender is a significant social factor because it influences the interpretation of experience. She adds that, “beliefs regarding gender appropriate behaviour do not only influence how men and women perceive each other but also affect their communication behaviour.” Citing Robert (1997), Laninhun explains that gender is socially constructed, not biologically determined. Accordingly, terms like ‘masculine’ and ‘feminine’ are used to reflect social constructions of gender, while ‘male’ and ‘female’ are used as biological terms to depict sex. What this means is that gender depends not only on biology but also on ideology and material culture.

Gender determines what is expected, allowed and valued in a woman or a man in a given context. In most societies there are differences and inequalities between women and men in responsibilities assigned, activities undertaken, access to and control over resources, as well as decision-making opportunities. Gender is part of the broader socio-cultural context. Other important criteria for socio-cultural analysis include class, race, poverty level, ethnic group and age. It is against this background that this paper examines the role of female professionals in advertising agencies’ management in Nigeria.

Gender domination is an issue of concern to scholars. Citing the works of Idiyorough (2005), Umeogu and Ojiakor , (2012, p. 149) refer to domination as “possession and control of power and authority and use of such possession against another person”. With reference to gender, domination is seen as “a situation of complete subjugation and oppression of women in the economic production and reproduction of children, where

men have (the) controlling power and authority”. Thus, it is not gender that determines subjugation and domination. Rather domination is a function of power relations in society. Power could emanate from physical force, economic, political, position, status of the individual gender in society. This may mean that an individual female executive with locus of authority could, if she so desires, dominate over the male subordinate. Gender domination emanates from power sources in hierarchical, patriarchal or matriarchal societies. Thus, Umeogu and Jailor, (2012) examined several dimensions of gender domination including power inequality, inequality in treatment, and inequality of value. To this list may be added inequality of access (to opportunities) , resources (capital, land or labour) and physical strength.

While colonialism catapulted advertising in Nigeria, nay Africa from pristine world –of-mouth level to one of print media and later broadcast-media channel advertising, including the Internet, globalization tends to have elevated advertising practice to a global status in contemporary era. In Nigeria for instance, advertising agencies debuted with the activities of British commercial conglomerates including United Africa Company (UAC) and Paterson Zachonis (PZ) (Olatunji, 2003, p. 32) . But it was the UAC, variously called Lever Brothers, (now Unilever) that first incorporated the first advertising agency in Britain to handle its operations in the British West Africa of which Nigeria was the largest market. The agency was called West Africa Publicity Limited, (WAP Ltd.) incorporated on 13 August 1928 and starting out in Nigeria initially as an in-house agency of the UAC, also providing essentially outdoor advertising services. The agency’s name (WAP Ltd.) was later changed to LINTAS, which according to Bel-Molokwu (2000) means Lever International Advertising Services, a member of LINTAS International. Olatunji, (2010, p. 34) observes further that LINTAS later “metamorphosed into SSC & B Lintas Worldwide; the Inter Public Group of Companies; and now the AMMIRATI PURIS LINTAS WORLDWIDE”. Lintas: Lagos is at present a member of the conglomerate.

Besides Lintas, other advertising agencies of colonial origin in Nigeria were Ogilvy, Benson and Mather (OB &M) Graham and Gills (G & G) Grant Advertising, and Advertising and Marketing Services to mention but these four. Between political independence in October 1, 1960 and January 1972, there were 10 advertising agencies

operating in Nigeria (Olatunji, 2010). However, sequel to the promulgation of the Nigerian Enterprises Promotion (Indigenization) Decree of 1972, advertising agency ownership was reserved for Nigerians, thus excluding foreign participation in advertising agency business. This provided much impetus to quantitative growth of the sector as the initial number of advertising agencies rose from 10 to 20 in 1973. “A decade later (1983), the number of modern ad agencies increased to 51” (Olatunji (2010, p. 35). But with the de-indigenization of advertising during the years of the implementation of the Structural Adjustment programme (SAP) in Nigeria (July 1986 – April 1999), the number of advertising agencies in Nigeria further increased to 57, and peaked at 88 in 1995, the most active years of implementation of SAP; it declined to 71 in 1998; and skidded further to 64 agencies in 2000(Olatunji (2010, p. 37). This fluctuating fortune should not be surprising because Olatunji (2003) established that SAP produced both the negative and positive consequences on the advertising industry in Nigeria.

At the time of the present study (2012- 2013), there existed a total of 78 advertising agencies that are officially registered with the Association of Advertising Agencies of Nigeria (AAAN, most of which are full service advertising agencies. The list excludes officially registered firms specializing in outdoor advertising (represented in Outdoor Advertising Agencies of Nigeria, (OAAN)); firms that are engaged in media planning, buying , and monitoring that are embodied in the Media Independent Practitioners of Nigeria (MIPAN), among others. Owing to increasing globalization of businesses, particularly advertising, foreign participation in advertising agency business in Nigeria is a noticeable trend. While direct advertising agency ownership in Nigeria by foreigners may be rare, affiliation of local advertising agencies to conglomerates is a dominant pattern. For example, a study established that at the end of 1995, there were 10 advertising agencies in Nigeria affiliated to foreign advertising giants (Olatunji, 2003); the number rose to 15 in 2010 (Olatunji, 2010). This paper determines the degree of involvement of female professionals in the advertising agencies management, ownership and development in Nigeria.

Review of Previous Studies

Over the years, women have been portrayed as domestic providers who do not make significant decisions, are dependent on men, and are essentially sex objects. Olatunji and Ayodele (2010) examined gender portrayal in advertisements in Nigeria, and noted the pervasiveness of indecency in advertising in Nigeria and other Western societies. The researchers concluded that “(t)he blatant and unwholesome use of sex as a marketing communication strategy tends, ultimately, to hurt the advertised brand, beside the negative implications on the society’s ethical, moral, cultural and religious values” (Olatunji and Ayodele, 2010, p.86).

Attention of scholarship has been changing to deeper issue of degree of involvement of the female gender in the mass media institutions generally, and particularly in the institutions responsible for advertisement creation and management, that is, advertising agencies. Okunna (2005) specifically assessed the issue of women visibility or lack of it in the news media in Nigeria. In a survey of four of the then existing newspapers in Nigeria (*Vanguard*, *Sun*, *The Guardian* and *ThisDay*), Okunna found that only six (8%) of the 77 reporters who had bylines are females. A breakdown shows that all twenty bylines in *The Guardian* newspaper were written by male journalists; one out of twenty bylines in the *Vanguard* newspaper was written by a female journalist; one of the 13 bylines in the *Sun* was authored by a female journalist; and four females of the existing bylines in *ThisDay* were produced by females. Okunna , (2005, p. 128) concludes that “women are grossly under-represented in the Nigerian press”, and therefore recommends the need for policy measures on fair gender representation in media organizations and firms. Earlier, Okunna (1992) carried out a survey of the gender of the academic staff of 10 of the then 40 academic institutions offering journalism education and found that there were 86 male academic staff as opposed to six (6) of their female counterparts, although there was a near gender parity in terms of students’ enrolment. A recent publication (UNESCO, 2014) confirms the global pattern of relatively higher number of enrolment of women than men in journalism/mass communication-related tertiary educational institutions programmes. However, a disproportionately low representation of women in top managerial levels of media organizations has been similarly reported. To support this, UNESCO (2014, p. 81) remarks:

The fact that the trend in educational achievement has not been reflected in an equivalent share of jobs for women in the media- particularly at senior levels- has continued to be documented in studies and reports from many countries, making it one of the most persistent trends in the industry.

Another study, (Umeogu and Ojiakor , 2012) examined the issue of gender domination in Nigerian public relations industry, using selected banks, public relations consultancy firms and two tertiary educational institutions in a state in South-East Nigeria. The major preoccupation of the researchers was to determine the dominant gender and power relations in the selected firms. The study finds that although female public relations practitioners outnumbered the males, “all the organizations (visited) have men at the top where they make all the decisions thereby maintaining their patriarchy” (Umeogu and Ojiakor , 2012, p. 152). It reports further that in quantitative terms, the ratio of female to male in the organizations studied was about 7:3, but in qualitative terms, men held “proportionately more of the managerial PR posts” (p.152). Thus it concludes that, “(w)hile the women dominate in number (in public relations practice), the men dominate in power” (Umeogu and Ojiakor , 2012, p. 153).

A recent study commissioned by the United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) (Ross, 2014, p. 37) investigated the extent to which women are employed in decision-making positions in large organizations across Europe; determine the types of gender equality/ and or women-focused policies in media organizations. The 99 media organizations investigated across European Union (EU) Member States and Croatia comprised 39 public sector organizations; 56 privately funded companies; and four (4) media companies with mixed-funding option. The report notes:

The most disturbing finding... is the low number of women who occupy senior decision-making positions or have seats on boards: 1037 positions (or 30%) out of a total of 3376 counted were held by women (Rose, 2014, p. 38).

A breakdown shows that one-third of top level positions in public service broadcasting organizations were occupied by women; and about one-quarter of similar positions were occupied by women in private sector media organizations. Moreover, the study reveals

that barely half of the organizations surveyed had some sort of gender equality policies and less than one in five of the organizations investigated had a gender-specific policy addressing sexual harassment (25%); dignity at work (19%); and maternity leave policy (17%). It showed further that public sector broadcasting organizations tended to have put in place a formal gender and equality structures than their private sector counterparts. Consequently the study concludes that:

Women continue to be under-represented in the decision-making structures of major media organizations, both at operational levels as Senior Managers and at strategic levels, as CEOs and board members (Ross, 2014, p. 39).

The study consequently advocates an affirmative action to achieve a 40% presence of women in the boardroom in publicly listed and publicly funded organizations, based on European Commission's 2012 proposed legislation.

Similarly, another report (UNESCO, 2014, p. 12) in a review of global trends in freedom of expression and media development notes that "overall, only a quarter of the people heard or read about in the news are female, just over a third of media industry employees are women, and the glass ceiling remains intact". Other gender-related trends include the fact that the contributions of women to news gathering are under-recognised and that "in all sectors, and areas of work, occupational discrimination continues and representation of women in the media continues to be particularly lacking in decision-making roles and levels, including ownership, within the media industry" (UNESCO, 2014, p. 58).

Chavez (2014) also presents another study initiated by World Association of Community Radio Broadcasters (AMARC) regarding the number of community radio stations run by women. It claims that a total of 4,000 community radio stations belonging to AMARC were investigated; approximately one in every five radio studios are run by women. Details are as follows: 117 of the 511 members of AMARC in Africa are run by women (ratio 1 (w) :5 (m)); in Latin America, the gender correlation declined to 1: 4; there is gender parity in North America and Canada; in Asia the ratio is 1:9; 1: 4 in Europe; and 2: 14 in North Africa and the Middle East. Sequel to this revelation of low level of women representation at decision-making levels in community radio management, Chavez (2014, p.49) also recommends as follows:

One path for making progress towards greater women's leadership is the creation of strategies that include affirmative action... I am referring to the need to carry out actions so that women community radio broadcasters can become active decision-makers at their radio stations, in their communities, within the national and regional and the international arena.

It is now necessary to examine works dealing with gender issues in decision-making in the advertising industry. Herskovitz (2000) wrote an article published in *Advertising Age international* titled "Withstanding man's demands". It was based on the proceedings of an interview held with Nooe Wakita, a female President of Dentsu Eye, an arm of the Japanese advertising conglomerate. It narrates the experiences of the female CEO:

At one of her first client meetings, executives approached a male colleague, wrongly presuming he was the boss. Even after business cards were exchanged, several clients still did not acknowledge her as in charge.

Quoting Wakita, "Clients always demand a man. Unless they change, then it will be tough for society to change as well as the advertising world." Herskovitz (2000). Presenting a short bio on the President of Dentsu Eye, Herskovitz (2000) recalls that Wakita began her career at Dentsu in 1964, and later stood out as an award winning copywriter. But:

While most female workers at the agency quit when they got married and had kids, Ms. Wakita stayed on as she raised two children. Today, Dentsu Eye has 57 employees, 55 of them women, frequently tapped from among Ms. Wakita's network and nurtured by her.

In a newspaper article, Bosman (2005) remarks that in spite of the fact that there is increasing number of women in advertising industry; there is a near absence of females at top positions in creative units in advertising agencies. It reports that of the top 33 agencies surveyed by *Adweek*, only four (4) females served as creative directors. The author concludes that this gender imbalance partly explains creation of advertisements

often perceived as sexist in polls and during focus groups. Citing a 2003 survey, Bosman (2005) reports that although women (about 65.8%) far outnumbered men in advertising agencies in the United States of America “the status of women declines with each step up the corporate ladder. Women hold 76.7 per cent of all clerical positions”. It states further that although women make up to 50% of the workforce in Britain, only 14% occupy senior executive positions, referring to a 2004 study by the British Institute of Practitioners in Advertising.

Another instructive study was carried out by Garcia-Gonzalez and Pineiro-Otero (2012) in Galicia, a region of Spain. The study set out to determine if relationships exist between the use of sexist stereotypes in advertising and the low presence of women in creative departments and departments involved in decision-making processes in advertising agencies. A total of 71 advertising agencies were investigated; 128 employees were initially surveyed. The qualitative research design was also employed, using focus group and in-depth interviews; there were five males and four female interviewees. The gender imbalance was explained by the fact that most of the female workers contacted failed to show up for the interview sessions. The study established that there are more female employees in the advertising sector in Galicia than males; half of the female employees are under 30 years of age. This was accounted for by the fact that in Galicia, there is unequal gender composition of students pursuing academic programmes in advertising and related fields at the ratio of three females to one male student. The study found an abysmally low level of women in management positions in the Galician advertising agency practice: only 17% of the 71 participating advertising agencies were headed by women. Also, there were more women (61%) in middle management positions than men (39%). Also, it was revealed that the number of female workers with higher education is higher than their male counterparts.

A cross section analysis of women presence in different departments within the advertising agencies also shows a disproportional picture, often skewed against women: There were more women (19%) in accounts department than men (2%); more men (38%) in creative departments than women (29%); near parity in production (13% women vs. 12% men), media (6% women vs. 5% men), account services (26% women

vs. 25% men). It observes that “the greater presence of men in the creative department confirms a national and international trend that discriminates against women in the creation of the advertising message”, (Garcia-Gonzalez and Pineiro-Otero 2012, p. 16). Equally, the preponderance of women in accounts and client services confirms the stereotypical notion that women are better in customer relations than men.

Based on situations such as described above, Garcia-Gonzalez and Pineiro-Otero (2012) conclude that there are male-dominated and female-dominated departments in Galician advertising agencies. It states that “despite the fact that the female work force is more qualified, joins quicker the labour market, and has a more extensive experience, it remains excluded from the managerial positions (vertical segregation) and certain departments (horizontal segregation), particularly the creative department (Garcia-Gonzalez and Pineiro-Otero 2012, p. 18). The skewed composition of gender in the Galician advertising industry, particularly the low presence of women in advertising creation and management, tended to have deprived the Galician advertising industry:

from an enriched perspective in gender representation, which continue to exhibit a biased view of women and men, given that they are based –almost exclusively- on the values, beliefs and attitudes of the male personnel, (Garcia-Gonzalez and Pineiro-Otero 2011, p. 18).

The purpose of a study carried out by Liesse (2013) were to both determine the number of women employees in creative department of advertising agencies as well as the number of women employed into senior management team in advertising agencies in the US. The 1000 respondents involved in the survey reported that about 45% of labour force in advertising agencies in the US is women with 55% male domination. However, “Top posts in management, creative departments, digital marketing, strategy and overall sales and marketing tend to be held by men, while media departments and account management are more often led by women” (Liesse , 2013, p. 11). Respondents were asked to name the biggest barrier to advancement of women in top positions in advertising agencies. About fifty per cent of them mentioned “interruptions to career because of family responsibilities” as the number one reason (Liesse , 2013, p. 11).

Thus, the under-representation of women at senior managerial levels and advertising agency ownership tends to have been sufficiently demonstrated as a global phenomenon in previous studies, (Liesse , 2013; Garcia-Gonzalez and Pineiro-Otero 2012; Bosman 2005; Herskovitz 2000) but remains to be proofed in Nigeria. A pioneer scholar in Nigeria (Okunna, 1992 & 2005) was focused on gender participation in newspaper management and news gathering as well as involvement in teaching of journalism at tertiary level of education, while contemporary scholars (Umeogu and Ojiakor , 2012) investigated gender domination in public relations profession. Moreover, survey of 168 employees drawn from 20 advertising agencies in Nigeria shows that there were more males (65%) than females (44%); most of the females were found in the Client services Department (Olatunji, 2003, p. 180). But no attempt was made by Olatunji, (2003) to identify the status of women on agency organizational hierarchy. Against this backdrop, the present study examines the nature of gender inequality in advertising business operations in Nigeria as well as the .level of involvement of women in decision-making structures and ownership of advertising agencies in Nigeria.

Theoretical Review

The human population is in either or gender categories (male or female), with deserved attention by scholars across generations (Jaggar, 1988; and Bryson, 2003). Liberal philosophical world outlook encapsulated in the legendary works of such scholars as John Locke, Voltaire, Wilkes, Paine, J.S. Mill, and Jefferson, dilated on important issues of class and or gender inequalities (Becker, 1945, pp. 29-30). The industrial revolution in Europe (specifically Britain) as well as the rise of capitalism remarkably altered the way women are perceived and treated; and the way women perceive and respond to their unique situation. It was such a situation that produced the likes of Mary Astell (1700), who posited that “If all men are born free, how is it that all women are born as slaves”, according to Jaggar (1988). The import of the above statement is that societies tend to perpetuate gender inequality, which underscores the need to link the movement for gender equality with the rise of liberal democracy. The liberal feminist theory, derived from liberal political economic thought, is therefore considered appropriate and relevant to the present study. Jaggar (1988, p. 27) notes:

Consistently over the centuries, feminists have demanded that the prevailing liberal ideals should also be applied to women. In the 18th century, they argued that women as well as men had natural rights; in the 19th century, they employed utilitarian arguments in favor of equal rights for women under the law; and in the 20th century, with the development of the liberal theory of the welfare state, liberal feminists demand that the state should actively pursue a variety of social reforms to ensure equal opportunities for women”.

The above underscores the 21st century agitation for affirmative action in matters relating to women. Jaggar (1988) explains further that recent liberal movements actively promote legislations and policies that prohibit discrimination against women; and promote equal access to educational and economic opportunities, particularly credit facilities; equality in employment and wage systems; and demands for benefits associated with child bearing and rearing, even including establishment of childcare centers in places of work. This phase of liberal feminist philosophical outlook is what Bryson (2003, p. 88) refers to as “Welfare feminism”, a movement which centered around: “improved maternal and infant health provision.... inclusion of women in the developing system of national insurance, and for economic assistance to women through maternity benefits or child allowances”. Thus, the involvement of female professionals in advertising agencies’ management and development in contemporary Nigerian society is better explained or seen through the prism of the liberal feminist theoretical perspective. In this study, the researchers expect to see, based on the liberal feminist theory, not just situations enhancing gender equality, but simultaneously expanding the accessibility of women to other range of benefits owing to their peculiar gender or reproductive roles in societies.

Method and Materials

The survey was carried out between 2012 and 2013 through self-administered and Internet mailed questionnaire copies to respondents in advertising agencies both in Lagos metropolis and other cities in Nigeria where advertising agencies are located. The area of study was chosen because 97 per cent of 78 officially registered Association of

Advertising Agencies of Nigeria (AAAN) advertising agencies are located in Lagos, Nigeria. Survey research design involved the use of 18-item close- and open-ended questionnaire. E-mail copies of the instrument were sent to all AAAN-recognized advertising agencies; while the self-administered copies were delivered using the purposive and convenience sampling techniques. Agencies with known female owners were selected on purpose; others were selected based on ease of accessibility. Only the respondents who agreed to participate in the study were selected as respondents. Questionnaire copies were administered on 170 subjects; there were 110 (or 65 %) returned and usable copies drawn from 20 (or 26%) of the existing 78 officially registered advertising agencies in Nigeria. Female respondents were surveyed to enable them assess level of women involvement in advertising agency management from the point of view of female professionals. The list of registered agencies (sample frame) was secured from the Executive Secretary, Association of Advertising Agencies of Nigeria (AAAN) and support received from leaders of women sub-group of the Association who shared email addresses of members to facilitate questionnaire administration. The descriptive data analysis technique was adopted.

Results

A total of 110 professionals drawn from 20 advertising agencies participated in the survey. The distribution of the female respondents is as follows: STB-McCann (10); FCB/Centrespread (10); SOU & Saachi (10); and Noah's Ark (9). TBWA/Concept, 141 Worldwide, and DDB advertising agencies had 8 respondents each. There are also six respondents from Rosabel Leo Burnett and Lintas Lagos/ Lowe Lintas respectively; another five from each of Insight Communications and DDK Associates. In addition, four respondents each were selected from Wetherhead Advertising Group and Bluebird Communication; while three respondents each were chosen from Mart Link Limited, Cerebral Consult Limited and Business Strategy and Communications Limited. The others are Goals & ideas where two subjects were selected; one respondent each was chosen from 24-Time, IMS Advertising and Access Advertising. The remaining three subjects did not specify their respective advertising agency institutional affiliations. As

the names of the above listed agencies indicate, a majority of them are affiliates of leading global advertising agencies.

Research Question 1: What is the dominant professional cadre occupied by female professionals in advertising agencies? Table 1 below shows that female professionals are often found in cadres such as officers (48.3 %) followed by middle level managerial cadre (27.3%). Women are rarely (4.5%) found at chief executive or directorship levels. This implies that women are predominantly found (27.3%) in middle level managerial and officer cadre (48.3%), than at top managerial levels (5.4%).

Table1: Cadres occupied by Female Professionals in Advertising Agencies

S/N	Position Held	Frequency	%
1.	CEO/ Executive Director		4.5
2.	General Manager		0.9
3.	Manager		27.3
4.	Officers		48.3
5.	Accountant/Finance		1.8
6.	Front Desk/ Secretary		4.5
7.	Trainee/Intern		3.6
8.	Other		9.1
9.	Total	n= 110	100

Table 2: Most Prominent Departments where Female Professionals Work in Selected Advertising Agencies

S/N	Prominent Department	Frequency	%
1.	Chief Executive Officer/ Directorship		5.5
2.	Client Service		24.5
3.	Administration/Finance		20
4.	Creative		23.6
5.	Media/Traffic		8.1
6.	Account Planning/Business Strategy		7.2
7.	Other		10.9

8. Total n= 110 100

The Table 2 shows the distribution of female professionals across departments and units of advertising agencies practice. Again, a majority (24.5%) are found in client services followed by Creative department (23.6%); and Administration (20%). Respondents were asked to rate their perception on adequacy of number of women employees in advertising agencies relative to the positions occupied by their female employees on a 5-point scale. Results show that 75.5 per cent of respondents claimed that female employees in advertising agencies in Nigeria is less than 50%. This means that female professionals surveyed believed that there are more male employees in advertising agency operations in Nigeria compared to their female counterparts. Table 3 illustrates the finding.

Table 3: Perception on Percentage of Female Employees in Advertising Agencies

<u>S/N Women employees compared with male counterparts</u>	<u>Freq.</u>	<u>%</u>
a) Females compared to males are less than 20 %		18.2
b) Females compared to males are 21 % - 39%		28.2
c) Females compared to males are 40 % - 49%		29.1
d) Female employees are barely 50%		12.7
e) Female employees are 60% and above		11.8
<u>Total</u>	<u>n= 110</u>	<u>100</u>

Research Question 2: What is the assessment of respondents on the adequacy of involvement of female professionals in managerial positions in advertising agencies?

Table 4 demonstrates that a majority of respondents (80.4%) agreed that females occupy less than 50 percent of the managerial positions in advertising agencies in Nigeria. In other words, female employees in advertising agencies in Nigeria disclosed that there are more men in managerial positions than women.

Table 4: Assessment of Respondents on Percentage of Female Employees in Managerial Positions in Advertising Agencies

<u>S/N</u>	<u>Women employees compared with male counterparts</u>	<u>Freq.</u>	<u>%</u>
a)	Female Managers are less than 20 %		50.9
b)	Female Managers are between 21 % and 39%		15.5
c)	Female Managers are between 40 % and 49%		10.0
d)	Female Managers are barely 50%		17.3
e)	Female Managers are 60% and above		6.3
<u>Total</u>		<u>n=</u>	<u>110</u>
			<u>100</u>

Research Question 3: What is the assessment of female professionals on level of women involvement in advertising agencies ownership in Nigeria?

Table 5 : Assessment on level of Involvement of females in Advertising Agencies Ownership

<u>S/N</u>	<u>Satisfaction with Women involvement in agencies Ownership</u>	<u>Freq.</u>	<u>%</u>
a)	Highly satisfied		8.2
b)	Satisfied		24.5
c)	Not satisfied		49.1
d)	Highly unsatisfied		18.2
<u>Total</u>		<u>n=</u>	<u>110</u>
			<u>100</u>

Table 5 shows that more female respondents (67.3%) are dissatisfied with the low level of involvement of female professionals in ownership of advertising agencies in Nigeria.

Research Question 4: To what extent are advertising agencies' work environments supportive of the aspirations of female professionals?

Qualitative data generated through an open-ended item on the questionnaire show that a majority agreed that there are no conscious policies promoting gender discrimination. Respondents' comments are: "If you are competent enough for the job, the agency will take you on as an asset. It (employment) is not based on gender"; "equal chance is given to male and female"; "they employ whoever can do the job, male or female"; and "gender is not a basic recruitment factor-competence, qualification and level of skills are the main policies". Other remarks made by our respondents are: "My agency is quite

liberal-minded and not partisan”; “there is no restriction or policy with reference to gender equality”; and, “it is an equal opportunity agency”.

There are however, a few of our respondents who identified certain discriminatory practices within some advertising agencies in the area of study. One of them opines that “there are certain jobs women are not allowed to handle because of its nature”. Similarly, another respondent wrote “in terms of employment selection, competence or skills, men are preferred to women”. Perhaps most illuminating is the view expressed by a female respondent as follows:

Agency prefers to employ or hire men instead of women because they feel that when women are married, they won't have enough time to concentrate on their job because of their children, family.

It may be concluded that although there are no formal discriminatory employment policies, certain discriminatory practices persist based on perceived skill, competence and relevance or usefulness of each gender category. For example more females tended to be recruited into the client services department based on their perceived human relations and interpersonal communication skills, if not their perceived emotional intelligence and social skills when interfacing with female clients.

Another area of gender equality investigated is that of agency policy on staff promotion. Seventy-three percent of the 110 respondents agreed that they are satisfied with agencies policy on staff promotion because it is non-discriminatory to women; 23% were not sure and the rest (4%) said advertising agencies policies on staff promotion did not favor female professionals.

Moreover, we investigated perception of respondents on adequacy of support offered to nursing mothers by management of advertising agencies. The result follows:

Table 6: Perception of respondents on adequacy of support offered to nursing mothers

<u>S/N</u>	<u>Perception on Adequacy of support to nursing mothers</u>	<u>Freq.</u>	<u>%</u>
a)	Excellent		41.8
b)	Good		22.7
c)	Poor		9.2
d)	Not sure		26.3
	<u>Total</u>	<u>n=</u>	<u>100</u>
		110	

Table 7 reveals that a majority (64.5%) are satisfied with the present level of support provided by advertising agencies to female employees who are also nursing mothers. Views expressed by some of the respondents who felt satisfied with current level of support to nursing mother are that: “there is a Crèche within the office premises”; “agency allows early departure from office and limited work hours for nursing mothers”; “three months maternity leave is in place, with full salary payment”. However, a dissatisfied respondent noted that some agencies still compel nursing mothers to work longer hours; another opined that nursing mothers are still advised to finish nursing their babies before they resume their duties without payment of salaries.

Discussion

Which are the departments within the advertising agency structure in Nigeria where female professionals tend to be predominant? A previous study (Garcia-Gonzalez and Pineiro-Otero) found that in the Galician advertising sector, there are more females (19%) in accounts department than males (2%); but more men in management (administration) (38%) than females; and more men in creative departments (38%) than females (29%). A near gender parity was however found in production, media and account services. The present study offers no opportunity for gender comparison but indicates a majority of female advertising professionals are in the client services department. Moreover, the present study shows that women are rarely (4.5%) found at chief executive or directorship levels. This implies that women are predominantly found (27.3%) in middle level managerial cadre and as officers (48.3%) in client services, than at top managerial levels (5.4%) (General Manager and above). This confirms previous studies on the paucity of women at top advertising agencies positions (Liesse , 2013; Garcia-Gonzalez and Pineiro-Otero 2011; Bosman 2005; Herskovitz 2000). There is therefore gender imbalance regarding women representation at top management level in Nigeria.

We probed further on the perceived preponderance of women in client services/account management. Interesting remarks are as follows: “It’s about persuasive power innate in women”; “It seems it is more of feminine job. Less stressful”; “women are more

pleasing to interface with clients”; and “Women tend to be more able to relate with clients, understand their needs, attract them and ensure their demands are met timely”. Some others also said: “The reason is because a female presence is usually seen as softer, thereby relaxing the clients a bit”; “clients most times prefer ladies handling their accounts”; and “Women are better communicators; they have better interpersonal skills and relationship management”. Other interesting comments are: “Women are more loyal, trustworthy and good in customer/client services”; “Clients tend to attend more to female than male staff”; and that females are very “pleasant and good at sweet talking (or convincing) clients”. Some other observations may not be too pleasant including statements such as: “It requires not so much skill to be a member of the client service department”; “Women have sex appeal and brain”; “Women get what they want most times”. Bosman (2005) had similarly observed that there is a near absence of female advertising professionals in the creative units or departments in advertising agencies.

The forgoing suggests to us that the reason why most agencies employ more women into the client services department or unit may have little to do with their level of education, intellectualism or skills related to the advertising practice, but rather owing substantially to the perceived value in attracting clients’ patronage. A similar study conducted in Nigeria (Umeogu and Ojiakor, 2012, p. 153) reports that the Managing Director of a Public Relations firm in Nigeria justified the preponderances of females in client service in that sector on the ground that “every organization needs clients, customers and accounts to survive”. Therefore, they “employ sharp women to attract customers because it is believed that the big customers are mostly men, and there is a predominant stereotype that men have “light brain” when it comes to pretty women”. This situation is even more worrisome when we consider the fact that, going by the professional code of conduct stipulated by the Association of Advertising Agencies in Nigeria (AAAN), it is unethical for agencies to directly solicit accounts from clients (Olatunji, 2010). Thus while it is legitimate to employ women as client services officers, using them as ‘baits’ to attract accounts represents gender exploitation; the practice also tends to be unethical. But what really is the locale of female professionals within the management hierarchy of advertising agencies in Nigeria? This study shows that women are predominantly found in middle and low level cadre than at top managerial positions. Women are rarely found

at chief executive or directorship levels. Also, this study reveals that a majority of respondents agreed that females occupy very low managerial positions in advertising agencies in Nigeria. Respondents who are dissatisfied with this state of affairs opined that women are hardly seen in top agency positions. One subject remarks that “we have just one woman occupying management position in my agency”. “Women are not really given prominent role in the agency”, says another participant. There are other comments such as “there is only one female in the creative department and she is not involved in management”; “we have no female executive director”; “Management is made up of mostly men”; “most of the decision makers are men”; and “often it’s men’s world”. Some others spoke in the same vein as follows: “There are only three female managers currently against seven males”; “women don’t get much involved in the strategic part of the business (of agency management); and “there is gender inequality at the managerial level”.

The Galician study earlier mentioned (Garcia-Gonzalez and Pineiro-Otero, 12 p.11) confirms the outcome of the present study and shows also that there is low representation of women at top management positions in that sub-region, with 17% of the 71 participating agencies being directed by women; 61% of women than men (39%) in middle-level management positions; and more women (80%) reported in low positions. Based on this, Garcia-Gonzalez and Pineiro-Otero, (2012, p.11) observe that “it seems that gender is seen as a relevant factor in the task of directing an advertising company in Galicia”. Consequently, it concludes that “the low presence of women in the executive positions of the advertising agency and the departments involved in the creation of advertising message has deprived the Galician advertising industry from an enriched perspective in gender representation” (p. 18). Similarly, Liesse (2013, p. 11) in a survey conducted by the Inter Public Group and Advertising Age, concludes that top positions in management , creative departments, digital marketing and strategy tended to be held by men, while women dominate media and accounts management departments. Above findings are in tandem with a global media- industry survey undertaken by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organizations’ survey report which concludes that “the dominant trend remains that women in most mainstream media companies still face a glass ceiling above senior editorial ranks, with men still firmly in

control of top management and governance functions”, (UNESCO, 2014, pp. 58-9). While the advertising industry in Nigeria is fast growing with global relevance, the sector is thus perceived to be a male-dominated world. Accordingly, based on the liberal feminist theory (Jaggar, 1988), it seems that there gender representation in the advertising in Nigeria is skewed against women, although not arising from deliberate corporate or institutional policies.

The critical issue of low level of women involvement advertising agencies ownership in Nigeria is also worthy of consideration, a situation that is similar to what is recorded in a study of 99 media organizations undertaken by Ross (2014), where out of a total of 4413 executive positions, 30 per cent were held by women. Data containing list of registered number of advertising agencies in Nigeria, secured in 2013 from the Association of Advertising Agencies of Nigeria (AAAN) during the course of this study, shows that only seven (7) of the existing 78 registered advertising agencies in Nigeria had female professionals as Chief Operating Officers, and or owners thus confirming the low level of involvement of females in advertising agency ownership and top management levels. In the same vein, AAAN (formerly the Association of Advertising Practitioners of Nigeria-AAPN), which came into existence in 1972, has so far produced two female Presidents of the total 18 past leaders so far. Also, all past six Chairpersons of the advertising regulatory agency in Nigeria (APCON), established in 1988, are males; along with the past three and one serving Executive Secretaries of the agency. It thus appears that within each advertising agency, the advertising professional association, and the advertising regulatory agency in Nigeria, women participation at top hierarchy remains sparse. Absence of a clear affirmative action and policies on women involvement; low level of access to capital; a highly adverse business climate; little degree of commitment to the entrepreneurial spirit; and the like, might explain why a majority of women are excluded from advertising agency leadership positions and ownership in Nigeria. To address the challenge of under-representation in key sectors of the Nigerian economy, Shittu (2015, p.83) posits:

When we empower women, we are empowering the society itself through its women. We need to empower our economy by strengthening the role of

women. When women occupy leadership positions, the society is empowered. We need to launch developmental projects under the direction of women.

The present research also sought to find out if working environment in advertising agencies is supportive of the aspirations of female subordinates. Some of the comments captured are as follows: “Most male bosses are supportive. But when deadlines have to be met, they exert *necessary* pressure; “I haven’t seen male boss exert pressure on female subordinates; somehow, it’s almost the other way round”; “Male bosses are very supportive of the female subordinates”; and relationships are “Cordial and respectful”. Other comments are that relationships are “supportive and understanding, provided the females don’t get over-familiar (with female bosses)”; “The men are sometimes bossy”; “The relationships are purely professional. No gender pressure.”; “Some (male bosses) are supportive. Some are not”; “Male bosses are usually more patient with female subordinates”; and “Males are domineering”.

In addition to the above, this study reveals that other supportive environment created by advertising agencies in Nigeria include granting of paid maternity leave to nursing mothers, provision of crèches in places of work, opportunities granted to nursing mothers to close early from work, and a host of other incentives. This study confirms that employment, promotion, remuneration policies in advertising agencies in Nigeria are not gender biased. Sexual harassment was not reported in the study, which supports the growing relevance of contemporary liberal feminism, aptly referred to as “welfare feminism” by Bryson (2003, p.139), a move supported by the United Nations Organization (UNO) and other feminists movements’ demand for affirmative action on issues relating to women. The view expressed by Rose (2014, p. 39) with regards to the above deserves greater attention: “a supportive working environment (should recognise) the value of women’s contribution (and must acknowledge women’s) different caring and family responsibility”. This situation is as important as the existence of formal equality policies which also must include mechanism for monitoring, evaluation and action, according to , Rose (2014). One of our respondents told us that within the advertising agencies in Nigeria, “It is a complete relationship cycle with the good, the bad, and the ugly, all to bring out the best”. Notwithstanding, we were unable to

confirm the existence of formal policies restricting gender equality or access to welfare packages by female professionals in the advertising agencies under study, thus suggesting that welfare feminism appears popular within advertising agencies under study.

Managerial Implications

This study investigated the department in advertising agencies perceived to be dominated by women; the status in organizational hierarchy commonly occupied by women in advertising agencies; the perception of female employees on adequacy of female participation in advertising agency management at top management level in advertising agencies; the level of female professionals' involvement in advertising agencies ownership in Nigeria; and the extent to which advertising agencies' work environment are female-friendly. It established that there is a preponderance of junior and middle-level female employees in Client Service departments of existing advertising agencies; and a low representation of female in advertising agency top management and ownership levels, although respondents believe that that working environment in advertising agencies in Nigeria is friendly to female professionals.

To address the need for increased involvement of women in decision-making in advertising agencies, it is necessary to create the right environment that will encourage female professionals to acquire relevant skills and academic/professional qualifications in core areas of advertising operations, like their male counterparts. The testimony of a respondent is relevant here:

I work in the Creative Department as an Art Director. I studied Fine-Arts. But most parents won't agree. I got into this through determination and it has paid off. I'm in this because I love what I do. Women should be supported while they push themselves to be relevant, especially in a male-dominated industry.

Another female respondent wrote:

Women who have the goal of and vision of owning an advertising agency should go for it and not be discouraged by the competition or their male counterparts. Uniqueness, truthfulness and professionalism is the key.

It is therefore time female professionals imbibed the entrepreneur spirit, given that relevant policies and institutional supports are put in place. Critical to the realisation of that noble goal is the need for government to support or guarantee funding of women business enterprises; banking industry support is also needed in terms of investment capital, along with series of affirmative actions to be initiated by relevant public and private institutions.

Moreover, there is need to give women more influence within creative departments and advertising agency hierarchy to maximize their contribution to the overall development of the advertising industry. A female respondent puts it thus: “More women should try to break out of their comfort zones and challenge themselves to take up the task of establishing their own agencies in the country”. Another female advertising professional, counseled her female counterparts as follows: “Don’t look down on yourself, or be intimidated. Always have the ‘I can do it’ attitude. Even if you make mistakes, it’s to make you better. Get involved”. It is interesting to find out that there are a few women occupying leadership positions in some of the selected advertising agencies. Accordingly, the need for such successful female professionals to mentor younger ones as well as provide critical support towards enhancing career growth and development of such new entrants is germane.

It is equally important for regulatory agencies such as the Advertising Practitioners’ Council of Nigeria (APCON) to put measures in place guaranteeing affirmative actions on gender employment relations in advertising agencies, while each agency must adopt well-articulated employment policies on specifying gender ratio in relevant departments in the agencies, including representation at management and board levels. It will behoove the regulatory agencies to monitor and evaluate implementation of gender affirmative actions. Women-specific management and leadership training programmes are also recommended, in line with the proposition of welfare feminism variant of liberal feminism theory.

In closing inherent limitations of this study should be addressed. For example, a major limitation of this study is that the opinions of male professionals on the subject-matter were not sought. Also, the sample size and scope of the study are limited. This will require that future researchers should broaden the scope of similar studies to the present deficiencies. A research design that allows for a more rigorous statistical data analysis should also be contemplated in the future. Notwithstanding the identified weaknesses of this study, the wealth of qualitative data generated and the insight it offers, particularly from the point of view of the female respondents, address critical issues in gender relations within the advertising agencies operation in Nigeria that require the attention of scholars, agency operators, professional associations, and regulatory bodies, in the quest to improving the existing theory, practice and development of the advertising profession.

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