

BETWEEN MEDIA CELEBRITIES AND THE YOUTH: EXPLORING THE IMPACT OF EMERGING CELEBRITY CULTURE ON THE LIFESTYLE OF YOUNG NIGERIANS

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Abstract

Interest in the famous seems to be a human phenomenon that goes as far back as recorded history. In ancient Greece and Rome, people created their gods as very human-like beings, complete with character flaws. Humans often appear captivated by those they see as glamorous. In the contemporary world, this phenomenon is being facilitated by the media. By performing such functions as status-conferral and agenda-setting, they have the power to set agendas on issues and confer status on personalities in the societies in which they are found. Today, young people are exposed, to an immense range of influential figures through television and radio, popular culture, print media and the Internet. Scholars have been led to interrogate how this affects young people, and to broaden the scope of celebrity studies. This study aimed at investigating the impact of celebrity culture on youth, and to determine whether they are affected more by their local or foreign celebrities. Based on the theory that media users can model after figures portrayed in the media, the study drew a sample size of one hundred and eighty undergraduates from Nnamdi Azikiwe Federal University in Awka, Anambra State of Nigeria and surveyed young people between the ages of 17 and 25. Findings suggest that the phenomenon of celebrity culture has become a reality in Nigeria, as young people are exposed for better or for worse to media figures. Furthermore, celebrity lifestyles as portrayed in mainstream and alternative media such as the Internet and satellite TV influence the social attitudes and lifestyles of these youth. Celebrity lifestyles affect their confidence and determination to be successful in life, the way they dress, talk, and handle issues about relationship, marriage and sex. The study contributes a Nigerian perspective to an already existing but scant dialogue on impact of popular culture and media images on the social behaviours and attitudes of young people. The study makes a call for media literacy: the cognitive abilities and critical competencies required for critical analysis and negotiation of media images (for instance, celebrities) circulated across the media.

Introduction

Flora Carlin (2004) recounts,

A few years ago, Britney Spears and her entourage swept through my boss's office. As she sashayed past, I blushed and stammered and leaned over my desk to shake her hand. She looked right into my eyes and smiled her pageant smile, and I confess, I felt dizzy. I immediately rang up friends to report my *celebrity encounter*, (emphasis mine) saying: "She had on a gorgeous, floor-length white fur coat! Her skin was blotchy!" I've never been much of a Britney fan, so why the contact high? Why should I care? For that matter, why should any of us? Celebrities are fascinating because they live in a parallel universe – one that looks and feels just like ours yet is light-years beyond our reach. Stars cry to Diane Sawyer about their problems – failed marriages, hardscrabble upbringings, bad career decisions – and we can relate. The paparazzi catch them in wet hair and a stained T-shirt, and we're thrilled. They're ordinary folks, just like us. And yet...

Celebrities, as Flora Carlin pronounced are without doubt ordinary folks, just like us, but such thinking seems to be more logical than is the case in real life. This is because with the rise in popular culture at the turn of the century, celebrities have assumed a god-like status in society. They are objects of fascination and wonder. They are idolised and looked up to by society. Human beings have a natural instinct to look to someone for reflection, affirmation and authority; whether as a hero, mentor, protector or higher power. What makes celebrities popular in contemporary times is exactly what they symbolise and represent: that 'higher' being.

It has been argued that the mass media have the singular potential to set agendas for society in which they are embedded. They may not tell us what to think, but they have become successful in telling and suggesting to us what to think about. Similarly, the media have been known to confer status on personalities and place due or undue importance on them, thus increasing their exposure and power. This preoccupation with celebrities is not unconnected with their fame. But important questions arise: What actually makes celebrities famous? Who in actual sense is a celebrity? The answers to these questions have become prime subjects of debate among scholars for decades. To some scholars, celebrities are objects of media creation; and a new phenomenon known as celebrity culture has since emerged for which the modern mass media is a major vehicle. Mell (2009) bemoans our fascination with celebrity culture and some of its ugly consequences:

In our culture, celebrity news often takes the headlines above world events. We build them up as modern gods, and tear them down when they show us they are all too human. They make an easy object of obsession, as celebrities are ubiquitous. And the paparazzi have helped this craze by blurring the line between private citizens and public persona. When Princess Diana died, it was in a high speed getaway to escape reporters/stalkers. French courts ruled that photographers were not responsible for her death, but it clearly drives home the point: Our obsession with the rich and famous has a cost on us, and on them.

Younger generations are perhaps affected the most by the culture of the famous since most of them are still in that contemplative age, the age of uncertainty, negotiating future goals and aspirations. This makes them prone to 'distractions'. Youth by definition is a time when adolescents' identities are understood to be generally fluid, it is a period of transition during which elements of an adult's future self are explored and in one way or another decided upon (Rall, Coffey and Williamson 1999). What adolescents are exposed to during their youth, what skills they learn and what skills they develop are very important in shaping their identities (*M/Cyclopedia of New Media*, 2005). One of the ways in which young people express their youthfulness in the current youth culture is through new technologies and the media. Young people seek to define who they are through what they wear, their peculiar jargon, experiences, hairstyles, group associations, et cetera. Accordingly, images from the media (soft-sell magazines, popular music, movies and drama series, celebrity talk shows, celebrity interviews, advertisements and product endorsements, and the appeals they come with) often provide the external basis from which teenagers will benchmark their thoughts, dreams, opinions, preferences, and associations.

In Nigeria, and indeed parts of Africa, the phenomenon of celebrity culture which from all indication is a western cultural experience, is fast perpetuating the mainstream cultural system of these societies. At the turn of the century, Nigerian media have produced quite a great modicum of celebrities arising from the multiplicity of popular media. These celebrities have also had their lifestyles hyped and glamourised in the media, resulting in a recent explosion of attention given to these media figures. Schuebel (2006)'s observation further introduces global youth culture as an aftermath of colonisation and globalisation of this part of the world by the West. Youth in Africa live and constitute their identities in a world increasingly shaped by the global communication networks and global consumption patterns flowing through the mass media (Ndlela, 2006). Global youth are seen as actively responding to and identifying with modernised and sophisticated

Western culture; a notion that paves the way for a new ‘question’ which this study must tackle: are there significant difference in the way international and or global celebrities affect the behaviour of Nigerian youth and the way our local celebrities do?

Problematising the research

Interest in the famous seems to be a human phenomenon that goes as far back as recorded history. In ancient Greece and Rome, people created their gods as very human-like beings, complete with character flaws. Humans are naturally often captivated by those they see as glamorous. We build up myths about humanised images or people, and then observe their every move, looking to expose every shred of ‘humanity’ inside them. Conversely, the media perform certain functions in the course of informing, educating, and entertaining their audiences, some of which are the status-conferral and agenda-setting functions. In their status conferral function, the media highlight certain personalities. These personalities are often politicians, wealthy individuals or entrepreneurs, great achievers, government officials. And of course celebrities – people celebrated for their talents and achievements in the popular culture or the entertainment industry (music, acting, fashion, sports, dancing, Reality Television shows such as American Idol, Big Brother Africa, in literary and fine arts). When these personalities are ‘promoted’ in the media, and as a result of what some scholars call “15 minutes of fame”, they instantly assume a famous status. They become regular faces on television, front cover of glossy magazines, on the Internet, and are used for advertisements of all types. In the end, these images are likely to have some impact on us as media users. They could become our idols, icons, role models and heroes.

O’Rorke (2006) argues that the mass media play a central role in influencing human behaviour through symbolic models presented in media contents. Some social commentators and scholars have bemoaned the general trend towards the trivialisation of news. They argue that the current obsession with celebrity news (and some are not celebrated for their good behaviour or great achievements) is emblematic. To say then, that we live in a celebrity-obsessed world or culture is an obvious and stressed observation. The youth as has been previously observed are at the forefront of this obsession. Today, young people are exposed, for better or for worse, to an immense range of influential figures through television and radio, popular culture, print media and the internet (Giles and Maltby, 2003). This situation is not helped by the global youth culture which is an offshoot of the rising popular culture – music, dance, arts, theater, movies and the internet, promoted by Western media conglomerates. In line with the above positions, this study examines the impact of emerging celebrity culture and the glamorisation of media celebrities on the lifestyle of young Nigerians. The study also investigates the nature of this impact and ascertains whether there is a [marked] difference in the way Nigerian youth are impacted by Nigerian celebrities, as juxtaposed with international, western celebrities.

Research questions

Four research questions were pursued in this study:

- i. Are youth exposed to media contents that glamourise and glorify the lifestyles of celebrities – local and international?
- ii. Do the lifestyles of these celebrities as carried by the media have any impact on the attitudes and behaviour of youth?
- iii. What is the nature of this impact?
- iv. Are there significant difference in the way international celebrities affect and impact on these youth as with that of local celebrities?

Theorising the research problem

The theoretical framework that underpins this study is the modeling theory of Mass communication. This theory was a spin-off from Albert Bandura (1977)'s social learning theory in which he reveals that,

Learning would be exceedingly laborious, not to mention hazardous, if people had to rely solely on the effects of their own actions to inform them what to do. Fortunately, most human behavior is learned observationally through modeling: from observing others one forms an idea of how new behaviors are performed, and on later occasions this coded information serves as a guide for action.

Modeling theory has since become a theory scholars of communication use to explain long-term influences of mass communications; that is, it can help in explaining why minor changes take place among individuals, eventually to accumulate in major changes in society (Defleur and Dennis, 1998). The Modeling theory as the fundamental theory for this study will help to shed light on the growing culture of celebrity in Nigeria, especially as the study will address the issue of whether celebrity culture and media portrayals of celebrities affect the lifestyle and attitudes of Nigerian youth. The media are no doubt selective in their representation of the They construct images and behaviours for different groups within the society. They present many depictions of people acting out patterns of behaviour in various ways. Indeed, the media have the power through selection and reinforcement to give us very influential portrayals of a whole range of groups, situations and ideas. Such group can be media characters or celebrities. Teenagers are the most susceptible group to images presented in popular culture. Through television, movies, magazine, music videos, the Internet, and other popular and alternative media, the media create images that appeal to youth and which have the ability to control the variety of material these youth incorporate into their lives. The modeling theory comes in handy as an appropriate assumption that situates this interplay between media portrayals of characters in popular culture and the attitudes, personalities and behaviour of youth.

Positioning the African youth in the global youth culture

Global youth culture as espoused by Kahn and Kellner (2007) is the transdisciplinary category by which theorists and policy analysts attempt to understand the emergence of the complex forms of hybrid culture and identity that increasingly occur amongst youth throughout the world due to the proliferation of media like film, television, popular music, the Internet and other information and communication technologies (ICTs) in their everyday lives. Global youth culture draws upon the Frankfurt School's conception of culture industry. It signifies the process by which industrialised, mass-mediated culture and commercial necessities drive global capitalism and attempts to justify its aims by incorporating youth into the consumerist system by means of their engagement with new media technologies.

Nkosi Ndlela (2006) writing about Zimbabwean youth and their negotiations with identity formation, writes that in recent years, the global popular culture has become a contested site for negotiations of identities in African cities. He however observes that new technologies and globalisation are influencing every aspect of social life in cities across Africa directly or indirectly, facilitating the diffusion of popular culture across frontiers and boundaries. Moreover, as African youth continue to battle their identities in the current youth culture, McLaren (1995) adds that potential sites of identification have expanded dramatically, carving out new, globally defined spaces in which ideas of self and other are imagined, produced and lived. African countries and particularly, African media are generally importers of western film, documentaries and music videos, propelled by the domestic desire and taste for western entertainment and media products. This singular fact is because African media are unable to compete with the expensive, high-class TV and film productions from the USA and Europe. While the conventional, indigenous mass media are important to the everyday life of young people, they have a restricted cultural negotiation

role. Consequently, western cultures are becoming visible, if not more visible to African audiences. As such, the media and communication systems are a constituent factor directly related to the processes of globalisation of culture due to their role in mediating aspects of popular culture (Ndlela, 2006). Certainly, alternative, non-mainstream media ranging from theatre, music to Internet-related technologies typified by the Internet and mobile telephones, are envisaged as antagonistic to mainstream media because they position themselves in opposition (Couldry and Curran, 2003).

Inadvertently, the African youth are believed to be at the receiving end of this scenario because, as Heaven and Tubridy, (2007) put it “the age of globalisation, more than any other age before it, is an age that has both exerted great effects upon, and been greatly affected by, young people” (p. 149). They further shared that,

Youth are seen as the part of society that is most likely to engage in a process of cultural borrowing that is disruptive of the reproduction of traditional cultural practices, from modes of dress to language, aesthetics and ideologies. From Japanese punk to Australian hip hop, youth subcultures are seen as being implicitly rebellious, born as much from a desire to reject the generation that went before them, as from an identification with what they have become. (p. 149).

According to Battaglia (1995), young people exercise their creative power discursively but also in and through their own bodies, setting in motion a process of self-realization and promotion of social status through consumption and expenditure, appearance, and fashion. This process is a matter of ‘self-making’, of capturing and ‘fixing’ the non-steady state of selfhood and identity in different cultural situations. In all these, the extensive reach of global popular culture through global communication systems seem to have given rise to the international and or global celebrity, (consider the international public reaction to the death of Princess Diana of Wales in 1997 and the unexpected death of king of Pop, Michael Jackson in 2009). Even more recently, with the diversification of media business interests as well as the development of convergent new media technologies, celebrities are traded like commodities across media platforms and global markets. Moreover, foreign television channels and satellite broadcasts of foreign media, through a diffusion process, filter the lifestyles mediated in these channels in African societies in general, and Nigeria in particular. Furthermore, as majority of Nigerian youth use mobile phones that are imbued with Internet facilities (Uzuegbunam, 2015) they enjoy a different and more ubiquitous kind of access. Again, popular foreign television programmes – films, dance, music, shows, dramas, and sports are recorded, dubbed, packaged and distributed through informal networks – “video clubs”, “video retail sellers” or individual exchange, often for a paltry price. This makes this ‘access’ relatively cheap and available.

Intersecting celebrity culture and the media

A celebrity is a person who is famous for being famous, regardless of what first brought him or her to fame. The advent of mass media increased the public interest in celebrities, and has even developed into a self-substantiating circuit (the “cult of celebrity”). Mell (2009) opens his discourse on celebrity culture and the American media in the following lines,

The pedestal on which we have put movie stars, sports figures, and famous people could give some people neck strain. We idolize them, follow their every move, and treat them as modern gods. There is a giant media subculture around the cult of personality. Gossip and news about the rich and famous is big business. Magazines like *People* and *Us Weekly*, TV shows like *Access Hollywood* and *Entertainment Tonight*, and a long list of blogs... have captured our imagination. More specifically, the celebrities on which they report have. These days, there are more celebrity magazines than real news [magazines] in the

United States. Simply go to a grocery store to see how obsessed America is with our neo-royalty.

People have a natural instinct to look to someone for reflection, affirmation and authority: whether it be a hero, mentor, protector or higher power. What makes celebrities popular at the moment is exactly what they symbolise and represent, that 'higher' being. Evidently, media celebrities have become part of our lives; the media's detailed attention to the movements of celebrities further increases their societal status, (Lasn, 1999) and our fascination with them. Dr. Marc Lamont Hill, an associate professor at Columbia University, and a consultant on the Rupert Murdoch-owned Fox News Channel, USA, agrees that more people watch *American Idol* than the evening news; more people read gossip blogs than scripture. He further notes that celebrity worship coupled with the Internet and cable TV has interfered with news cycles and has forced new media to vigorously compete for ratings. The worry is that most of these celebrities are not celebrated because of their good behaviour or great achievements as such, but because:

In the news business, tabloids and entertainment coverage, the old saying, "*If it bleeds, it leads*" is the name of the game. Nothing sells like blood, and the gorier the better, it seems. Take any newspaper or TV news programming and examine how much space or time is devoted to coverage of murders, disasters, calamities – and celebrity scandals. The negative stories far outweigh the positive, although from time to time the producers will mandate some soft news coverage in an attempt to provide balance. Still, the salacious and the violent will always surface. Why? Because it sells, attracts viewers, increases awareness of the brand that is the media outlet (*Behavioural Health News*, 2009).

This is not all: media's preoccupation with the lives of celebrities (celebrity culture) has transcended into what psychologists have come to term "celebrity worship syndrome". This is an obsessive-addictive disorder in which a person becomes overly involved with the details of a celebrity's personal life. Celebrity culture is also a symbiotic business relationship from which performers obtain wealth, honours, and social power in exchange for selling a sense of intimacy and appeal to audiences. The immense financial returns from this venture seem to be a driving force. Celebrities, as has earlier been observed have become, in the light of the current culture of celebrity, sales persons of sorts. Gladwell (2000) agrees that they explicitly attempt to persuade others who are unconvinced about what they have been hearing and viewing and possibly, subconsciously alter the thoughts and buying decisions of their publics. Finally, as Holmes and Redmond (2010) would argue:

...few would now challenge the idea that celebrities have a special or privileged place in the media world; they reverberate at its centre and suggest (in a multitude of often contradictory ways), that if one attains celebrity status, one will have symbolic access to the pulsating heart of modern life and the power lines that operate there. (p. 6).

Methodology

The research design employed in this study was the survey method. The population of the study was the full-time undergraduate students of Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka, Nigeria. The choice of Nnamdi Azikiwe University students as the study population lies in the belief that it is a Federal University in Nigeria which boasts of multi-ethnic categories of students, with diverse backgrounds and psychographic compositions. A small portion of one hundred and eighty students was selected from the population, using multi-stage probability sampling technique. Given that each cluster has similar characteristics, I randomly selected six out of eight faculties of the Awka campus of Nnamdi Azikiwe University. The selected faculties include: Arts, Education, Natural Sciences, Law, Management Sciences and Social Sciences. From each of the faculties, with the exception of Law faculty, the author randomly selected two departments. Since this study was

designed as a survey, the data gathering tool was the questionnaire. Nonetheless, as the questionnaire included open-ended questions, qualitative analyses of the comments and personal opinions of the respondents became also important.

Analyses and discussion of findings

Analysis of the respondents' demographic data showed that 53% were female, while 47% were male. This shows an almost even distribution between the male and female respondents represented in this study. Furthermore, 58% fell within the age bracket of 22 – 25 years, while 41% were within the age category of 17 – 21 and 0.6% fell below 17 years of age. This age spread is in line with UNESCO's (<http://www.un.org/esa/socdev/documents/youth/fact-sheets/youth-definition.pdf>) definition of a youth as one who is between 15 and 24 years. Moreover, the data on age above indicate that majority of the youth of the focus university have attained a certain degree of social autonomy as they are no longer teenagers as such but young adults who are in control of their actions and decisions to an extent.

The first research question sought to find out whether youth are exposed to media contents that glamourise and glorify the lifestyles of celebrities – local, or international. Firstly, data indicate that the respondents were aware of various media of communication that glamourise the lifestyles of celebrities in Nigeria and barely 15.2% were not familiar with such media. Secondly, 71 percent agreed that they are familiar with the details of the lives of foreign celebrities, while 48 of them at 28.9 percent were not. Also, the respondents who depend on satellite TV for news and information about foreign celebrities were recorded at 20.5%, while those who rely on the Internet, satellite TV and foreign magazine is at 24%. Lastly, the respondents who rely on local Nigerian media, Satellite TV and the Internet for news about foreign celebrities came highest at 26%. These categories of media combination came highest (72%) in the rating as seen in the data analyses. Similarly, 87% of the respondents agreed that the listed media were responsible for the popularity of celebrities, while only 13 percent said otherwise.

One thing is clear: the youth surveyed were exposed to media that both glamourise local as well as foreign celebrities. This fact is further buttressed by their wide knowledge of celebrities from other parts of the world from different categories of the culture industry. Again the percentage of the respondents who agreed that they rely on the Internet, satellite TV, foreign magazine as well as both indigenous and foreign media for news about foreign celebrities rated highest at 73%. Indications also abound that youth in Nigeria do have access to alternative, and non-mainstream media that help them keep track of their favourite celebrities at the 'other end.' This ties up with Schuebel's (2006) argument that 24-7 cable and satellite programming and the Internet have added to youth's ability to stay current with ongoing celebrity drama even from foreign countries.

The second research question sought to find out whether the lifestyles of celebrities as portrayed by the media have any impact on the attitudes and behaviour of youth. Data showed that approximately 79% of the respondents were captivated by the lifestyle of popular celebrities. For 46.2%, their degree of this captivation was strong. 64.5% said that they are influenced by the appearance or lifestyle of any popular celebrity, and 43.4% admitted that the celebrities affect the way they think about sex, relationships and marriage. Furthermore, approximately 99% think celebrities in general have influence on the attitude and behaviour of the Nigerian youth in general.

The percentage of the respondents who claim that celebrities do not affect their opinions about sex, relationship and marriage is higher than those who think otherwise. Secondly, majority of the respondents said they are not influenced to buy products for the fact that a celebrity is used to promote them. However, it is still deductible from data in the table below that the lifestyles of celebrities as promoted by the media do have a social bearing on the behaviour and attitude of the Nigerian youth. However, it was the qualitative data that tend to furnish further insight into this phenomenon. The respondents' responses suggested that they are captivated by these celebrities – strongly and partially, and they are affected by their lifestyle/appearance in many ways.

| | Respondents' Perception of Captivation with Lifestyle of Local and International Celebrities | | Degree of Captivation with Celebrities | | Respondents' Perception of Being Affected by the Lifestyle of Popular Celebrities | Response to Whether Celebrities Affect Respondents' Opinion about Sex, Relationships and Marriage | Respondents' Perception of Whether Brand Promotion Celebrities Influence Their Buying Decisions | Respondents' Perception of Whether Celebrities Influence the Behaviour/Attitudes of Nigerian Youth |
|--------------|--|--------------|--|--------------|---|---|---|--|
| Yes | 78.7% N = 36 | Strong | 46.2% N = 78 | Yes | 64.5% N = 107 | 43.4% N = 72 | 16.8% N = 28 | 98.8% N = 168 |
| No | 21.3% N = 133 | Partial | 36% N = 61 | No | 35.5% N = 59 | 56.6% N = 94 | 83.2% N = 139 | 1.2% N = 2 |
| | | Weak | 17.8% N = 30 | | | | | |
| TOTAL | 100% N = 169 | TOTAL | 100% N = 169 | TOTAL | 100% N = 166 | 100% N = 166 | 100% N = 167 | 100% N = 170 |

Table 1: Showing Influence of Celebrities on Respondents' Behaviour and Attitudes

Research question three sought to understand the nature of the impact which media portrayal of the lifestyles of celebrities have on the attitudes and behaviour of youth. Going by the data presented as well as the qualitative analyses, the following can be construed: A larger percentage of the youth surveyed want to look as smart and as stylish as some celebrities they know. A greater proportion wants to behave like celebrities they have encountered. Others look upon celebrities as their role models. A bigger fraction of the youth said that celebrities' appearance help to boost their self esteem, confidence and value. Also in rating celebrity influence on Nigerian youth, majority of the respondents (46.4%) affirmed that the influence has more negative bearing than negative; while an equal 27% answered that the influence is positive, and both negative and positive, respectively. Indeed, one thing is apparent: celebrity influence on the surveyed youth shows that their opinions lie in the negative.

In addition, qualitative analyses of the open ended responses to the aspects of the youth's lives that celebrities influence indicate a mixture of both. On the positive scorecard – celebrities help them to have an understanding of their personality, enhance their self esteem, and make them determined in achieving their life goals. Some of the respondents actually remarked: "Their big breaks encourage me to dream big" and "to work hard to be like them". Celebrities also improve the respondents' development of certain skills like singing and dancing, and influence their philanthropic commitments. On the negative scorecard – indications are rife that this influence might negatively affect their notions about sex, relationships and marriage, especially as some celebrities, by experience are not one's best role models in these issues (talk of bad celebrity marriages and scandals making the news regularly). It is equally feared that this influence might

push young people to having a get-rich-quick mentality that could further drive them to seek shortcuts to fame and stardom. Moreover, there are perplexing hints that youth may not depend on celebrities for more serious reason(s), but for trivialities such as type of hairdo to adorn, the way to talk, the latest fashion sense, dress code, physical expressions and mannerisms as indicated in the qualitative appraisal.

The fourth research question sought to understand whether there is any significant difference in how international and local celebrities influence the youth. Data show that a great percentage of these youth depend more on foreign celebrities for standards of appearance and behaviour than they do on Nigerian celebrities. Again, the level of influence which foreign or international celebrities have on youth in Nigeria is either “Very strong” or “Strong”. A respondent actually opined that “even most Nigerian celebrities copy, imitate and aspire to be like the foreign celebrities”.

| | Respondents' Perception of Preference of Foreign/International Celebrities to Nigerian/African Celebs | Respondents' Perception of Whether Foreign Celebrities Influence Youth More Than Nig. Celebs | Dependence of Nigerian youth more on Foreign Celebs for Behaviour/Appearance Than on Local Ones | | Respondents' Perception of Whether Celebrities' Appearance Intimidate or Boost Their Confidence |
|--------------|---|--|---|--------------|---|
| Yes | 52.4% N = 77 | 85.4% N = 134 | 88.3% N = 144 | Very Strong | 50.3% N = 82 |
| No | 47.6% N = 70 | 14.6% N = 23 | 11.7% N = 19 | Strong | 32% N = 52 |
| | | | | Moderate | 17.7% N = 29 |
| TOTAL | 100% N = 147 | 100% N = 157 | 100% N = 163 | TOTAL | 100% N = 163 |

Table 2: Respondents' Perception of Difference in Preference and Influence

Conclusion

Youth indeed as Rall, Coffey and Williamson (1999) said is a time when adolescents' identities are understood to be commonly fluid, a period of 'conversion' during which the rudiments of an adult's future self are explored and in one way or another decided upon. The findings of this study corroborate other researches on celebrity influence that many teenagers [and youth] are emulating celebrity idols and these famous people have the power to determine what looks normal (Oliver, 1999). The findings further reinforce Omenugha, Uzuegbunam and Ndolo (2016)'s impression that youth in Nigeria certainly negotiate their social as well as cultural identities in the age of globalisation with media celebrities as one of the major vehicles. The media no doubt represent our society to us by constructing images from different frontiers of society, setting agendas on issues and conferring status on figures from our societies. At the turn of the century with the rise in popular culture, interest in the famous seems to have risen in prominence and news about celebrities have become more attractive and newsworthy. Madlela (2014) investigated the representation of male and female celebrities on magazine covers and how this might influence teenagers living in the UAE. The findings corroborate this current study and confirm that the youth emulated the celebrities' behaviours as they see them as trend-setters and

believed these behaviours to be acceptable norm for men and women in society. Furthermore, the youth copied fashion designs, make-up looks and hairstyles that the celebrities were shown wearing.

Reflecting upon Battaglia (1995)'s earlier assertion: young people exercise their creative power discursively but also in and through their own bodies, setting in motion a process of self-realization and promotion of social status through consumption and expenditure, appearance, and fashion. This process according to him is a matter of 'self-making', of capturing and 'fixing' the non-steady (fluid) state of selfhood and identity in different cultural situations. This research has confirmed this, further validating the application of the modeling theory of mass communication to the research problem. In the end, aside the more prominent conclusions that have emerged from this study, we ought not lose sight of the fact that celebrity culture in Nigeria among the media and the youth may be an aftermath of globalisation. It could also be said that celebrity culture is one of the nuanced ways in which neocolonialism is experienced in Nigeria and more broadly in Africa. While we contemplate these issues, it is important to advocate for media literacy in this age of globalisation and the new media. Media literacy here entails the development of the intellect, the cognitive abilities and critical competencies required for critical analysis and negotiation of media images (for instance, celebrities) circulated across the media. Celebrities are media constructions and their lives do not necessarily represent reality. This realisation will help to moderate the consumption of these constructed images.

This study contributes a Nigerian perspective to an already existing but scant conversation around the impact of popular culture and media images on the social behaviours and attitudes of young people. Moreover, as this study is based on a small number of sample size purposely drawn from the population of the regular students of Nnamdi Azikiwe University in Anambra State, Nigeria, the findings, it is feared may not be widely generalised. Nonetheless, the ideas generated by the Nigerian youth that were surveyed has provided a not-to-be-ignored source of data; and the methodology employed provides a motivating model on which further studies could be conducted. This is because the research process is almost always a long trip to the unknown, with stops along the way. It does not really end.

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