



The Role of Online Comedy Skits in the Sexual Objectification of Women in Nigeria

Chinwendu Praise Akalonu¹ · Louisa Ha²

Accepted: 9 April 2024
© The Author(s) 2024

Abstract

Recently, online comedy skit creators have become celebrities and influencers in Nigeria, amassing millions of followers on various social media platforms. The *influence* of these influencers on their followers and society can be harmful when negative messages like sexual objectification of women are propagated. Using a mixed methods approach, this study examines the role that comedy skits play in the promotion of female sexual objectification in Nigeria. The study examines YouTube video content from six (6) major comedy skits makers. The results indicate that all six (6) of the major online skit comedy makers analysed in the study use various elements of sexual objectification such as sexual language, sex appeal, male gaze, and sexualization in their YouTube videos. This finding has implications for women and girls in Nigeria as well as the world since media's portrayal of women as sexual objects have been linked to global violence against women and girls.

Keywords Sexual objectification · Nigerian comedy skits · Sexual objectification in comedy · Sexual objectification in digital media · Objectification of women

✉ Chinwendu Praise Akalonu
cakalonu@email.sc.edu

✉ Louisa Ha
louisah@bgsu.edu

¹ Department of Mass Communication, University of South Carolina, Columbia, SC, USA

² Department of Media and Communication, Bowling Green State University, Bowling Green, OH, USA

Introduction

The objectification and sexualization of girls in the media are linked to violence against women and girls worldwide (Swift & Gould, 2021). The sexualization of women is an age-long issue that has plagued society. For a long time, women have fought to be seen not in terms of their bodies but in terms of their value and humanity.

In Nigeria, the objectification of women started long ago with sayings such as “the woman is to be seen and not to be heard,” “ukwu nwanyi Owerri,” translated as “the waist of a woman from Owerri (a part of Igboland in Nigeria). These sayings reduce the allure of a woman to her body. In recent times, magazines, television, the internet, etc., have also been used to sexualize women. For example, Odukoya (2017) found that women are sexualized in top magazines in Nigeria. More disturbingly, the influx of comedy skits on the internet has exacerbated this trend of sexualization of women.

Online comedy skit video makers are considered influencers and celebrities in Nigeria, with a significant following. For example, the following comedy skit makers have a massive following on Instagram: Broda Shaggi; 9.3 million, Sidney Talker; 3.3 million; Mr. Macaroni; 2.5 million, Nastyblaq; 2.2 million, MC Lively; 2.5 million, Nedu; 2.3 million. With a large number of followers, these comedy skit makers can endorse and shape audience attitudes just like social media influencers. This can be done through their contributions to blogs, tweets, and general conversations on social media (Freberg et al., 2011). This means that whatever message they put out, would have a significant effect on their audience’s attitudes, perceptions, and even behaviors. This is significant since Ha and Yang (2022) have asserted that celebrities and social media influencers can influence consumers’ decision-making beyond products to other socially relevant issues. Audiences, through having a parasocial relationship with celebrities, see celebrities as life support or oxygen for existence (Ojomo & Sodeinde, 2021). Such relationships then become even more harmful when a negative message such as sexual objectification is propagated.

In a study on media objectification, Ward (2016) showed that the media’s sexualization of women has dire consequences, such as promoting women’s body dissatisfaction and self-objectification, increasing support for sexist beliefs, and increasing tolerance for sexual violence towards women. Yet, the media’s characterization of women and female sexuality has focused heavily on sexual appearance, physical beauty, and sexual appeal to others (Ward, 2016), often portrayed through the “male gaze.” Online comedy skits in Nigeria have been alleged to embody this portrayal of women with content that idolizes body curves, voluptuous breasts, and big buttocks (Oni, 2023).

This study therefore aims to uncover the role of popular comedy skits in the sexual objectification of women in Nigeria. It will identify elements of sexual objectification embedded within Nigerian comedy skits using YouTube content posted by the six (6) most prominent online comedy skit makers in Nigeria: Mr. Macaroni, Broda Shaggi, Sidney Talker, Nastyblaq, MC Lively, and Nedu.

By shedding light on this phenomenon, this study lays the groundwork for understanding and addressing content that promotes the sexual objectification of women in Nigeria. As an illuminating resource showing the prevalence of such sexual objectification practices popular online in Nigeria, this research can illustrate the far-reaching

potential consequences such as violence against women, sexual harassment, societal sexism, and other negative consequences. It will also serve as a reference point not only for academics but also for media regulators in Nigeria, who can draw from it to develop policies for online content moderation. Overall, this research could lead to important discussions and initiatives to stop the sexual objectification of women in Nigerian internet comedies and other contexts.

Literature Review

The History of Comedy Sketches/Skits

Comedy skits, also known as sketch comedy, involve short humorous acts or short comedy scenes meant to entertain an audience (Brigham, 2020). It began in the second half of the 20th century with the stage and then blossomed into radio (Brigham, 2020). Examining the emergence of comedy sketches online, Ojomo and Sodeinde (2021) highlighted that it is one form of entertainment amongst many that have migrated from broadcast media to social media and are often delivered in video formats. Through the years and with the emergence of the internet, the production of comedy skits has taken on new forms, from short video productions meant for TV to short-form content on YouTube, and now simultaneously on different social media platforms like Instagram and TikTok. Today, there are more producers of these sketches than ever before. Online comedy skits, just like new media productions, are increasingly produced by independent content creators on social media platforms. Online comedians adopt these visual sketch comedies to suit the platform's video length requirements (Brigham, 2020).

The Development of Comedy Sketches in Nigeria

In Nigeria, it is difficult to establish the inception of online comedy skits. However, most of what is known today as comedy skits became popularized by comedians such as Bovi, Basketmouth, Mark Angel, Naija Boyz, Falzthebahdguy, Crazeclown, Emma Oh my god, Wofaifada and many others (Ayoola, 2019). These skit makers leveraged YouTube as a platform to distribute their content and gain followers. Since then, there has been an unprecedented influx of new online comedy sketch makers and actors such as Maraji, Tywse, Broda Shaggi, Lasisi, Taoma, Josh2funny, Sidney Talker, Zicsaloma, Mr. Marcaroni, Brainjotter, Nedu, Nastyblaq, and many others (Odutuyo, 2021). Entertainers now leverage social media skits as their entry point into comedy (Ojomo & Sodeinde, 2021). Most online comedy sketches in Nigeria started with nostalgic family content reinforcing the stereotypic conceptions of "African parents." However, more recent comedy skits adopt content centered around romantic man-woman relationships, poverty and money, and the emphasis on women's bodies.

Sexual Objectification and the Sexual Objectification Theory

Adopting Langton's (1993) sexual objectification conceptualization, Papadaki (n.d.) highlighted critical features of sexual objectification. (1) reduction to the body: the treatment of a person as identified with their body or body parts; (2) reduction to appearance: the treatment of a person primarily in terms of how they look or how they appear to the senses; (3) silencing: the treatment of a person as if they are silent, lacking the capacity to speak. Also, Nussbaum (1995, as cited in Papadaki, 2021) included (4) ownership—the treatment of a person as something that is owned and can be bought or sold. Aubrey and Frisby (2011) also noted that sexual objectification could be portrayed through (5) body exposure. According to their study, sexual objectification occurs whenever body parts are on display, usually isolated body parts associated with sexual activity like the cleavage, chest, buttocks, and pelvis.

The Objectification Theory notes that sexual objectification will likely contribute to mental health problems that disproportionately affect women, such as eating disorders, depression, sexual dysfunction, and other health issues (Szymanski et al., 2011, p. 8). Szymanski et al. (2011) also noted that women who are portrayed in such lights in the media are often the target of men's sexist comments, including the use of deprecating words to describe women, sexual remarks (comments about women's body parts), and behaviors like ogling, leering, catcalling, harassment, etc. In a study on the effect of the male gaze on appearance concerns in college women, Calogero (2004) found that the adverse effects of objectification can be experienced even without actual interaction with the opposite sex. Calogero (2004) called this the "anticipated male gaze," which was found to be associated with body shame and physique anxiety.

There have been studies that have argued that objectification is not necessarily a bad thing for women. For example, Soble (2002, as cited in Papadaki, 2021) argued that humans are inherently objects; thus, objectifying them is not inappropriate. Other studies have found that some women enjoy sexualization (Liss et al., 2011), although the authors also noted that the women who reported enjoying being sexualized were also likely to report that they suffered sexualizing consequences such as feeling shame about their bodies and gained their self-esteem from feeling attractive. This view of sexualization was linked to the third wave of feminism's belief in empowered sexuality, where femininity and sexuality were believed to be empowering for women. Yet Hall et al. (2012) found a correlation between posting self-sexualizing profile pictures and accepting stereotypical notions of beauty, race, gender, and sex roles. Therefore, sexualization, though viewed differently by individuals, has been shown to have consequences that prove to be unfavorable to women.

Sexual Objectification Online

There has been some interesting research about sexual objectification on YouTube, the world's largest video-sharing platform with over 1.9 billion users (Duò, 2022). Scholars such as Döring and Mohseni (2019) researched the role of fail videos (videos that document an act of unexpected failure, humiliation, embarrassment, pain, etc.) on YouTube in promoting the sexualization of women and gendered hate. They

found that women are portrayed twice as often as men in a sexually objectifying manner. Interestingly, women are the target of sexist and sexually aggressive hate comments more often than men in these failing videos. Evidence of the sexualization of women on YouTube was also found in McCarthy's study of the comment section of women athletes. McCarthy (2022) found evidence that women athletes were victims of sexually objectifying comments and aggressive sexual behavior from male users on YouTube. Interestingly, these comments with lewd remarks served a homosocial bonding function for such male users on the app. These studies highlight the prevalence of sexual objectification in online spaces and underscore the importance of addressing these practices to protect women and girls worldwide.

Sexual Objectification in Nigerian Media

Sexual objectification is not a new phenomenon in Nigeria's entertainment industry, which is the largest in Africa. The industry is currently the second-most prolific film industry in the world (International Trade Administration, 2021). Researchers have investigated sexual objectification in Nigerian entertainment terrain. For example, Chinelo and Jonathan (2018) investigated the sexualization of female senior secondary school students in Nigeria and found that increased exposure to entertainment media led to increased female students' exposure to sexualized content or depiction of women as sexual objects in the media. Ejem et al. (2022) studied the depiction of women in Nigeria's movie industry, Nollywood, and found that women were sexually objectified in Nigerian films produced between 2000 and 2014 (p. 58), with most of them being portrayed in a way that allowed viewers to judge them only by their physical appearance and body attributes. Odukoya (2017) analyzed 61 magazine advertisements and found that women were mostly used for decorative purposes and objectified in over 70% of the advertisements analyzed in the study (p. 285). These studies have helped to establish that the sexualization of women in prominent Nigerian media has been longstanding, but more importantly, they show that this persistent problem needs to be managed for posterity as the impact is likely to become widespread with the emergence of online media content.

Sexual Objectification in Nigerian Comedy Skits

The emergence of online media results in rapid dissemination of content. As an offshoot of the entertainment industry, online comedy skits are available to audiences not just in Nigeria, in Africa, but the world. This means that any content idea presented in Nigeria's comedy skits has a far-reaching impact beyond Nigeria itself. Although the sexual objectification of women is not new, its proliferation on social media has far-reaching consequences compared to traditional media. For example, online comedy skits on social media go viral and reach a global audience more quickly than traditional media. This increased exposure can amplify the effects of sexual objectification in society.

Hence, it is concerning that sexual objectification of women has become the leading content attribute for Nigerian online comedians. Fekurumoh (2022) highlighted examples of Nigerian comedians whose content bordered hugely on sexualizing

women. A key example was Sydney Talker, who made a skit confessing his affection to his girlfriend, and when asked why he loved her, he fantasized about her big bosom and buttocks (Fekurumoh, 2022). Nigerian online skit makers have been alleged to use women who have large breasts and large buttocks or use languages that suggest the female in the skit is only there for her sexual appeal (Oni, 2023). This has become even more prominent with the coming into the limelight of certain comedians like Mr. Macaroni around 2020, during the global COVID-19 pandemic.

Mr. Macaroni became famous for his skits on relationships, women, and money. Since the launch of his career, he has featured several influential celebrities, and political and traditional leaders in his skits. Some notable features in his skits are the Ooni of Ife (a traditional monarch in Yorubaland), Don Jazzy (a popular musician and producer), and Cubana Chief Priest (a famous socialite) among others (Ojomo & Sodeinde, 2021). In 2020, his fame skyrocketed with his involvement in the #END-SARS protest, a socio-political campaign to end police brutality (Iwuoha & Aniche, 2021). This has given him even more credence and, thus, more fame for his comedy content. His role in the protest cultivated Nigerians' perception of him as an activist of repute. Consequently, his words, actions, and content can strongly influence his Nigerian audience, especially, the younger demographics. Yet, his content reinforces negative stereotypes about women.

Research Questions

Based on the review of relevant literature, there has not been a systematic study of the role of comedy skits in the proliferation of sexualization of women in Nigeria. This study therefore seeks to resolve this by examining elements of sexual objectification embedded within Nigerian comedy skits. Therefore, the following research questions are explored.

RQ1: Do comedy skits made by Mr. Macaroni use more sexual language than those produced by other popular Nigerian comedians?

RQ1 examines the use of sexual language by online comedy skit makers. It aims to compare the use of sexual language by Mr. Macaroni in comparison to the other comedy skit makers in Nigeria. Mr. Macaroni's videos deserved special attention because of his large number of followers and political reputation as an activist. Moreover, he is well known for his use of sexually stimulating words such as "freaky-freaky" to address female characters in his series of philanderer comedy skits. Recently, an advertisement he did for D'General Bitters was flagged by the Advertising Regulatory Council of Nigeria (ARCON) for being "sexually stimulating (Ihesiulo, 2023). It is relevant to investigate if this is an isolated event or if creating such sexually stimulating content is his content style across the board. Moreover, comparing his content with others will give the audience a perspective on the impacts of his content on others, especially since more and more up-and-coming comedy skit makers have been beginning to copy his content style since his rise to fame.

RQ2: How are women objectified in Nigerian online comedy skits?

The second research question examines how women are sexually objectified. Vanbuskirk (2021) pointed out that women who are objects of the male gaze in media usually appear attractive and sexy and seem to feed the sexual interest or agenda of the male characters. They wear heels and tight dresses and are often eye candy or romantic interests. Oni (2023) also noted that online comedy skit content in Nigeria often idolizes women's body curves, voluptuous breasts, and big buttocks (Oni, 2023). Therefore, this question will explore if women with these features as described by Vanbuskirk (2021), and Oni (2023), are used in comedy skits by popular online comedy skit makers in Nigeria.

RQ3: Is the sexualization of women a prevalent theme in popular comedy skits in Nigeria?

The final research question examines the prevalence of female sexualization in online comedy skits in Nigeria. (Aubrey and Frisby, 2011), have noted some features of sexualization including sexual movement, sexual posing, and seductive facial expressions, therefore it is important to measure how frequently these elements are used in Nigerian online comedy skits.

Research Method

The authors used a mixed-method approach to provide comprehensive insight into the sexualization of women through online comedy skits. The Journal of Mixed Methods Research (JMMR) defines mixed methods as "research in which an investigator collects and analyses data, integrates the findings, and draws inferences using both qualitative and quantitative approaches or methods in a single study or a program of inquiry" (Tashakkori & Creswell, 2007, p.4).

Mixed methods research was adopted for this study because of its numerous benefits. One of these benefits is its complementary nature. It facilitates the comparison of quantitative and qualitative data sets to produce well-validated conclusions (Migiro & Magangi, 2011, p. 3759). The result from the quantitative content analysis will benefit from a robust qualitative visual analysis to provide a comprehensive understanding of sexual objectification in Nigerian comedy skits. The mixed methods for this study include a quantitative analysis of the 60 top comedy skit videos of the six influencers and a qualitative analysis of four specific comedy skits.

Content Analysis

Content analysis was chosen because it can systematically investigate the attributes of the communication messages (online comedy skits) (Stroud, 2017). Content Analysis was applied to answer the research questions. The content analysis included sixty (60) top comedy skits in 2021 from six popular Nigerian online comedians posted on YouTube. Top/ most viewed comedy skits were chosen because it is most relevant to the study and can have a high reach of audiences.

A purposive sample was initially adopted for the study. This was because the researchers wanted to include the most viewed comedy skits from the top online comedy skit makers instead of all. After all, they are the most watched and are most likely to influence a large audience. Their popularity was determined using their subscriber numbers on YouTube among online skit comedians: Broda Shagi; 1.2 million, Sidney Talker; 144,000, Mr. Marcaroni; 534,000, Nastyblaq; 104,000, MC Lively; 301,000, Nedu; 234,000. Next, the 10 most viewed comedy skit videos from each comedian were selected for analysis. The researchers used Octoparse, the web scraping service, to scrape all the videos within the channel and sort by popularity on Excel to get the most viewed videos. A total sample of 10 videos was selected from each comedian for coding. In this study, the sampling and coding units are the same.

The first author compiled the video links from YouTube, and 10 independent Nigerian coders were trained to code the videos following the best practices suggested by Lacy et al. (2015). Manual content analysis was chosen for this study as opposed to computerized content analysis because it will be easier for human coders to detect the nuances in the dataset as some of the subtitles used in the video may contain lingua that computer-assisted text analysis might not detect and decode, such as certain slangs, expressions, physical touch, gaze, etc. peculiar to Nigerians.

Coding

Ten (10) independent Nigerian coders were used for this study to code the video content. Training on the coding process took place on WhatsApp group chat as the coders were in different geographical locations from the authors and were separate from each other. The coders were trained on how to code each item within the codebook. The process involved watching each of the videos and entering the information requested in an online coding sheet created using the Qualtrics software. After that, the coders were given different videos to code. The authors did not code videos in the final coding process to minimize subjective bias. A total of 60 videos were sent out for coding, each unit of analysis was from the most popular videos on the skit maker's YouTube channel. All the coded videos had a female character.

For the analysis, a final total of 48 videos with complete coding were used: nine (9) videos from Mr. Macaroni, eight (8) from Nedu and Sydney Talker, seven (7) from both Broda Shaggi and NastyBlaq, and six (6) from MC Lively. Intercoder reliability was obtained between the coder and the first author with a subsample of 10 videos. There was a 65% agreement between the two coders. The percentage agreement was highest in the variable sexual language and male gaze and was lowest in the variable sexualization.

Visual Analysis

Visual analysis has been described as a method of exploring the attributes of visual materials and their significance within the context in which they are produced or encountered, as well as the social practices in which they are used (Van Leeuwen & Jewitt, 2001). Since the units of analysis for this study are videos (which are visual materials), the authors deemed it appropriate to use visual analysis to provide an in-

depth understanding of sexual objectification components within comedy skits. To achieve this, a purposive sample was applied to select samples from the 60 videos initially selected for the content analysis. The video-based qualitative visual analysis was used to examine the nature of the sexualization objectification components within the coding units. This analysis was done by the first author, who chose one video for analysis from each comedian. The measurements used for the analysis were the same as the one used in the content analysis. This includes sexual language, sex appeal, male gaze, and sexualization. Each video was analyzed based on the different measurement components and the nature of each occurrence.

Measurement

Sexual Language. Szymanski et al. (2011) have highlighted the use of sexual remarks as a feature in the sexual objectification of women in media. In this study, the use of sexual language is measured by the presence of words like “freaky,” “sexy,” “baby,” “daddy,” “naughty,” and “spicy” within a coding unit. These words were curated by the researchers, and they represent commonly used sex-related words in Nigerian media to describe women or sexual activity. It was measured by identifying the occurrence of at least one or more words from the list of words within a coding unit. If sexual language was present within a coding unit, it was coded yes=1 and no=0.

Sexualization. The presence of sexualization, including sexual movement, sexual posing, and seductive facial expressions (Aubrey and Frisby, 2011), and physical touch, such as wooing, was measured using incidences of shaking of the buttocks, shaking of the breast, lip smacking, tongue licking, touch on the bum, the breast, the waist, the chin, open arm, thigh, and private parts, etc. If sexualization was present within a coding unit, it was coded as yes=1 and no=0.

Ownership. Papadaki (2021) identified ownership as a feature of objectification—the treatment of a person as something owned by another (that can be bought, sold, or has a price). The researchers operationalized ownership as offering or giving money to a woman in exchange for a sexual favor within the coding unit. The coders chose “yes” or “no” to determine whether ownership was present within the coding unit. Ownership is considered a characteristic of sexualization in this study.

The male gaze. Fredrickson & Roberts (1997) asserted that “the most subtle and deniable way sexualized evaluation is enacted—and arguably the most ubiquitous—is through gaze, or visual inspection of the body” (Fredrickson & Roberts, 1997, as cited in Szymanski et al., p. 24). In their study on sexual objectification in music videos, Aubrey and Frisby (2011) also noted that a way to operationalize sexual objectification was to measure the extent to which artists were shown being checked out in videos—using features such as leering and looking at sensitive body parts such as the breast, bum, and thighs (camera angling on these parts will also be considered part of the male gaze). If the male gaze was present within a coding unit, it was coded as yes=1 and no=0.

Sex appeal. The variable, sex appeal in this study, was measured using “the presence of women with big buttocks (bums), big breasts, tight clothing, revealing clothing (cloth that is transparent and shows sensitive parts of the body), or sexual scenes

with a woman within a coding unit. If sex appeal was present within a coding unit, it was coded yes=1 and no=0.

Analysis and Results

Content Analysis

The results of the analysis showed that out of the 48 cases analyzed, 93.8% had a female character, while only 6.3% featured no female character. Of the cases analyzed, only 20.5% contained no sexual language, while 79.5% contained sexual language. The most used sexual language was “baby” (52.3%), followed by “freaky” (15.9%), “daddy” (4.5%), and “sexy, naughty, and spicy” (2.3%).

To find out if Mr. Macaroni used more sexual language than other skit makers (RQ1), the variable “skit maker” was cross-tabulated with the variable “sexual language.” The results showed that Mr. Macaroni used more sexual language in his videos than any other skit maker or comedian. The results showed that Mr. Macaroni used sexual language 23.5% of the time, followed by Nastyblaq, Sidney Talker, Nedu (17.6%), Broda Shaggi, and MC Lively (11.8%). Interestingly, of all the sexual language used within the videos analyzed, “baby” was the most used. It was used more by Sydney Talker and Nedu in all (100.0%) of their videos, followed by Nastyblaq (83.3%). Freaky, which was the second most used sexual language, was used most by Mr. Macaroni (75.5%) of the time and Broda Shaggi (25.0%).

For sexual appeal (RQ2), a frequency comparison was made. The results showed that 85.4% of the videos had indications of sex appeal, while only 14.6% of cases contained no indication of the use of sex appeal. The category with the highest number of cases was women with big bums (47.9%), followed by women with tight clothing (14.6%), women with big breasts (10.4%), and women wearing revealing clothing and sexual scenes (6.3%). To find out which comedians used more of these women for sex appeal, the sex appeal was cross-tabulated with skit makers. The results showed that overall, Mr. Macaroni used more than other comedians (18.8%), followed by Sidney Talker and Nedu (16.7%), Nastyblaq and Broda Shaggi (14.6%), and MC Lively (12.5%), Videos with more than one comedian (6.3%).

MC Lively (28.6%) used the most women with big bums, followed by Mr. Macaroni, Nastyblaq, and Nedu (17.4% each), Sidney Talker (13%), and Broda Shaggi (8.7%). Nedu and Mr. Macaroni used more women with revealing clothes (33.3% each), while Mr. Macaroni (60%), Sidney Talker, and Nedu (20% each) used women with big breasts. Sidney Talker and Nastyblaq used more women with tight clothing (28.6% each), followed by Mr. Macaroni, Broda Shaggi, and Nedu (14.3% each).

For the male gaze, the analysis showed that 46.7% of the cases had no incidence of the male gaze, while 53.3% of cases had incidences of the male gaze. Incidences of the male gaze with the highest occurrence were the protagonist looking at a woman’s breast (40.0%), followed by looking at a woman’s bum (37.8%), the camera zooming into a lady’s bum (31.1%), the camera zooming into a lady’s breast (26.7%), the protagonist looking at her thigh (17.8%), and the camera zooming into the lady’s lips (8.9%). A cross-tabulation of male gaze and the skit makers showed that Mr. Maca-

roni had 21.4% of male gaze within his videos, followed by Sidney Talker (19.0%), Nastyblaq and Nedu (16.7%), MC Lively (14.3%), and Broda Shaggi (11.9%).

For sexualization (RQ3), 100% of the videos contained incidences of sexualization. Wooing a girl had the highest occurring case (63.3%), followed by a woman shaking her bum (30.0%), suggestive touching by the protagonist (23.3%), giving a woman money, and a woman shaking her breast (16.7%), while seductive dancing was the least reported case (3.3%). To find out which comedian had higher sexualization cases, a cross-tabulation of the variable sexualization was done with the comedy skit makers variable. The results showed that among videos with sexualization scenes, Nedu had the highest cases of sexualization (23.3%), followed by Mr. Macaroni (20.0%), Sidney Talker, and Nastyblaq (16.7%), MC Lively (10.0%), Broda Shaggi (6.7%), and more than one comedian (6.7%) (See Table 1).

Visual Analysis

To provide more insights into how sexualization is practiced in the video, a visual analysis was applied to analyze samples from the 60 videos initially selected for analysis. This involves examining the composition, context, and significance of the video content. Purposive sampling was used to select videos from the initial sample. The videos were selected because they represented a typical video posted by the comedians in the study (for instance, if a video did not have a female character, it was skipped in favor of one that does). The researchers selected one out of 10 videos from each comedian for the analysis. At the time of conducting the visual analysis, two out of the six comedians had deleted their YouTube videos, (one deactivated his page), therefore, the researchers could not access the videos or their links. Therefore, for this analysis, only four videos were analyzed from the available sample. The link to each video used in the analysis is available as a supplemental file.

Video 1: Mr Macaroni (Fear Women OOOO)

The scene opens with a female character who walks into a supermarket. Mr. Macaroni is coming out of his car and dancing when he looks at her backside. He follows her closely. The female character is a young woman wearing a short, tight black dress that enhances her breasts and bum. He calls out “*Hello, dear,*” and when she pays attention to him, he tries to woo her. She mentions she owns the shop, and he says, “*A very beautiful shop you have here; I love hardworking women; that is my weakness. You need to be supported.*”. He then proceeds to offer her 2 million naira as “*support.*” In offering her the money, he mentions a platform. When she isn’t familiar

Table 1 Frequency of sexual objectification by major comedians

	Mr Macaroni	Broda Shaggi	MC Lively	Sydney Talker	NastyBlaq	Nedu
Sexual Language	23.5%	11.8%	11.8%	17.6%	17.6%	17.6%
Sex Appeal	21.43%	11.90%	14.29%	19.05%	16.67%	16.67%
Male Gaze	21.4%	11.9%	14.3%	19.0%	16.7%	16.7%
Sexualization	20.0%	6.7%	10.0%	16.7%	16.7%	23.3%

with it, he says, “*You don’t know NQR, c’mon freaky.*” After offering her money, he is intercepted by his wife.

In the scene described above, there were several elements of sexual objectification. The appearance of the female character with short and tight clothing indicates sexual appeal. By wooing the lady in question and offering her money or “support,” he displayed ownership, which indicates sexualization. Just 1:59 into the video, Mr. Macaroni checks out the female character by looking at her buttocks; this is an example of the male gaze within the video. He later remarks, “*A very beautiful shop you have here,*” not referring to the actual shop but her body. This is another incident of the male gaze. Using the word “freaky” in reference to her indicates the use of sexual language. Although this video was to promote a payment platform, it still stays true to the key features of most of Mr. Macaroni’s videos: the sugar daddy that woos women by giving them money, using words like freaky, and getting caught for being “naughty” by someone.

Video 2: Nedu (the Reunion Pt 3)

The 58-second video opens with the camera zoomed into a woman’s breasts. The female character has massive breasts. Nedu is her landlord, and he is sitting very close to her. She is discussing with Nedu and wants him to clear her debts.

The opening of the skit to the lady’s breasts conveys the central message of the video. The use of a lady with very big breasts is used to create sex appeal for the viewer while the close-up shot of the lady’s breasts is indicative of the male gaze. In their conversation, Nedu said, “*Disrespect me, slap me, touch my bear-bear*” (the term “bear-bear” is a Nigerian slang for beard); This statement, although seemingly non-sexual has very sexual connotations in the Nigerian context. By asking her to disrespect him, Nedu is inviting the female character to touch him physically in inappropriate ways. This act of trying to woo the character and invitation for physical touch is indicative of sexualization.

Video 3: MC Lively (Don’t Touch Me!)

This video opens with MC Lively at the gym, lying on a rolling mat, trying to exercise. The camera shows a female character working out. MC Lively is looking at her bum. This is evidence of the male gaze. The camera also zooms into her bum. This also counts as another incidence of male gaze. Within the video, when MC Lively approaches the lady, he says, “*I didn’t even know you’re fine like that, see your...*”. Although he did not complete his statement, the viewer knows he is alluding to her buttocks; this can be also an incidence of the male gaze because his eyes glazed over her body suggestively. Also, when he said, “*I am just sampling you,*” he used suggestive sexual language because to sample someone in Nigeria means to check them out sexually.

Video 4: Broda Shaggi (Iya Shaggi the Hoodlum)

This video was a collaboration of Broda Shaggi with several other comedians such as Nedu. The duration of the video was 17 min, making it the longest video in the sample. At 2:07 of the video, a woman passes in a tight red dress that enhances her physique. Another comedian, Sabinus, looks at her bum, and the camera is also angled toward it to give the viewer a better view. He exclaims “*glory, glory, glory*” while he looks at it suggestively.

The use of the woman with tight clothing is indicative of sex appeal. The act of looking at her buttocks, and the angling of the camera towards it, is indicative of the male gaze. He calls out to her, “*Agent of darkness, they have something against here, here, and here,*” pointing at her breasts, bum, and most private part; this act of pointing at her private body parts is an incidence of sexualization.

At 6:59 of the video, Nedu, who is a character featured in the skit, enters a bus and sits close to a female character who is different from the first. He proceeds to woo her by smiling at her, asking her name, and finally offering to pay for her transport fare. This scene in the skit depicts wooing and ownership which are regarded as features of sexualization.

Discussion

Among six of the most followed Nigerian comedians on YouTube, the results show that a majority (79.5%) of their most watched videos contain elements of sexual objectification of the female characters. The results of RQ1 show that Mr. Macaroni is not alone in using sexual language within his videos, as do other comedians. James Yeku Mr. Macaroni’s character; “Daddy Wa,” is described in these skits as “a philandering agent who derives pleasure from the sexual objectification of women” (Yeku, 2021). Mr. Macaroni has been known to be a leading pioneer of the use of voluptuous women in his comedy skits with the tagline “You’re doing well.” He usually says this to them in a mocking appreciation of their physical features. Fekurumoh (2022) also noted that Mr. Macaroni has become skilled in always using ladies in his skits, even when they serve no apparent purpose. They are thrown in for the comedian’s stereotypical objectification and sexualization (Fekurumoh, 2022). The visual content analysis also showed that Mr. Macaroni used more sexual language than other comedians. Other comedians like Nedu and Sidney Talker also make high use of sex appeal, sexualization, and the male gaze. It can be concluded that all the top comedians used various elements of sexual objectification within their videos, albeit to various degrees.

The prevalent use of these sexual objectification elements, like sexual language, sex appeal, male gaze, and sexualization, highlights the need to study the effects of these content types on the Nigerian audience. As noted earlier, these comedians are also popular influencers who can affect their followers’ perceptions and even behaviors. For example, in the aftermath of the #ENDSARS protest, Mr. Macaroni’s status shifted from just an online comedian to that of a political activist. Therefore, the negative and misogynistic treatment of women in his comedy skits should be a

concern to researchers and his audience, as these can have grave consequences for women in Nigeria.

There have been studies that link sexual objectification with rape, harassment of women, and violence against women (Wood, 1994). With the growing cases of sexualization and sexual objectification in Nigerian comedy scenes, there have also been several reports of sexual harassment perpetuated by various comedians. For example, recently, a post made by a Twitter user accused a comedian, Isbae U, of sexual harassment. According to the tweet, he allegedly demanded sex from a girl in exchange for a role in one of his comedy skits (Oladipupo, 2022). This raises concern if the constant portrayal of women in these skits as objects for the sexual fantasies of men is likely to have disastrous offline effects of perceiving these women as sexual objects. These comedians recruit women in the shows only in terms of their bodies rather than their talent in comedy skits. More than that, there is also an overarching danger of sexual abuse for these women since they are reduced to sexual objects.

Certainly, sexual objectification is not only prevalent in Nigerian comedy skits but also occurs in larger Nollywood movies. Some might argue that the portrayal of women in these skits is only an extension of the larger movie industry. While this may be true, the argument still holds that the sexual objectification of women is becoming increasingly rampant, especially with the advent of the internet and social media. The dissemination of these types of content is fast and far-reaching. Moreover, there are no age restrictions or rating systems on this content, unlike television. Thus, the sharing of these types of content perpetuates negative stereotypes among teenagers who are allowed to use social media platforms to view this content. These stereotypes and negative portrayals of women, if not checked, will have grave implications for the future generation of girls and women in Nigeria.

Limitations and Suggestions for Future Research

A limitation of the study was the incomplete data during the analysis; only 48 videos were used for the analysis instead of the original 60 sent out for coding because of incomplete coding from coders. Future research should therefore consider using a larger sample size for statistical analysis and minimizing the sampling error.

Additionally, because the visual analysis was adopted later than the content analysis, videos of the two comedians (Sydney Talker and Nastyblaq) were no longer available. At the time of the qualitative analysis, they had deleted videos from their YouTube channel. Nastyblaq deleted his channel, while Sydney Talker deleted most videos from his channel, leaving only YouTube shorts and 12 compilation videos. The availability of only 12 videos raises questions about whether the sample collected from him represents his typical content. This deletion of content is a testament to the temporality of web content, and this poses a challenge to research using online data (Stroud & Joyce, 2015).

Future research should consider replicating this study using a different platform, like Instagram. Most of these comedians engage in cross-platform promotion and post their videos on multiple platforms to reach a larger audience and gain more engagement. Some comedians, like Sydney Talker, still have a significant number of videos on Instagram. This might be because of the preference for Instagram over

YouTube for these kinds of content. Future research can also examine the role of platform policy in encouraging the promotion of certain content types.

Future research on the sexual objectification of women in Nigerian comedy skits should also consider studying the role of female comedians in propagating these negative stereotypes and portrayals of women. There is also a need to study the audience's awareness of the nature of these types of sexualized content and the effect on women and Nigerian society's attitudes toward women. In addition, researchers can explore the difference in males' and females' perceptions of women and their consumption of these comedy skits.

Conclusion

This research offers a thorough analysis of the widespread impact of online comedic content in Nigeria, specifically concerning the portrayal of women as objects of male fantasies. It highlights the prevalence of sexual objectification in these humorous storylines with both qualitative and quantitative analysis, underscoring the reliance of many online comedy skit makers on depicting women and their bodies as their comedic materials.

These results highlight the pressing need for media literacy training among Nigerian media users and regulatory bodies. The normalizing of women as nothing more than objects feeds negative stereotypes and reinforces inequality of gender status, which further marginalizes women in Nigerian society. Additionally, the prevalence of sexual objectification in online comedy content has significant negative consequences for women and girls in Nigeria. It undermines women's dignity, reinforces harmful gender stereotypes, and may hurt their mental and emotional health.

In response to these findings, this study calls for the creation of uniform policies and guidelines for content production not just in Nigeria, but across digital media platforms as well, since, to the best of our knowledge, YouTube also does not have policies that specifically address the sexual objectification of women. These regulations should prioritize the protection of women's rights and the advancement of gender equality in media representation. By advocating for standard regulations that challenge negative sexual stereotypes and narratives with empirical evidence of sexual objectification in online videos, this study shows the necessity for a more equitable and inclusive media landscape in Nigeria that respects and empowers women and girls.

Funding The authors declare that no funds, grants, or other support were received during the preparation of this manuscript.

Open access funding provided by the Carolinas Consortium.

Declarations

Competing Interests *The authors have no relevant financial or non-financial interests to disclose.*

Open Access This article is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License, which permits use, sharing, adaptation, distribution and reproduction in any medium or format, as long

as you give appropriate credit to the original author(s) and the source, provide a link to the Creative Commons licence, and indicate if changes were made. The images or other third party material in this article are included in the article's Creative Commons licence, unless indicated otherwise in a credit line to the material. If material is not included in the article's Creative Commons licence and your intended use is not permitted by statutory regulation or exceeds the permitted use, you will need to obtain permission directly from the copyright holder. To view a copy of this licence, visit <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>.

References

- Aubrey, J. S., & Frisby, C. M. (2011). Sexual objectification in music videos: A content analysis comparing gender and genre. *Mass Communication and Society*, 14(4), 475–501. <https://doi.org/10.1080/15205436.2010.513468>.
- Ayoola, S. (2019, April 25). *Retro: 5 Nigerian Comedians Who Pioneered Funny Skits on Instagram*. Legit Retrieved December 7, 2021, from <https://www.legit.ng/1235277-retro-5nigerian-comedians-pioneered-funny-skits-instagram.html>.
- Brigham, A. (2020, November 1). A Brief History of Sketch Comedy and Its Evolution from 1959–2020. *Hollywood Insider*. Retrieved December 2, 2021, from <https://www.hollywoodinsider.com/sketch-comedy-history/>.
- Calogero, R. M. (2004). A test of objectification theory: The effect of the male gaze on appearance concerns in college women. *Psychology of Women Quarterly*, 28(1), 16–21. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1471-6402.2004.00118.x>.
- Chinelo, J. U., & Jonathan, N. O. (2018). Entertainment Media Outlets as predictors of sexualization among female senior secondary school students in Rivers State, Nigeria. *American Journal of Applied Psychology*, 6(1), 8–13.
- Döring, N., & Mohseni, M. R. (2019). Fail videos and related video comments on YouTube: A case of sexualization of women and gendered hate speech? *Communication Research Reports*, 36(3), 254–264. <https://doi.org/10.1080/08824096.2019.1634533>.
- Duò, M. (2022). *10 best video hosting solutions to consider in 2022 (free vs. paid)*. Retrieved October 17, 2022, from <https://kinsta.com/blog/videohosting/#:~:text=1.,YouTube&text=YouTube%20is%20the%20largest%20video,month%2C%20nothing%20even%20comes%20close>
- Ejem, A. A., Nwokeocha, I. M., Abba-Father, J. O., Fab-Ukozor, N., & Ibekwe, C. (2022). Sex objects and conquered people? representations of women in Nigerian films in the 21st Century. *Qistina: Journal Multidisciplin Indonesia*, 1(2) 48–63.
- Fekurumoh, S. (2022). How women are constantly objectified in Nigerian comedy. *Afrocritik*. Retrieved October 18, 2022, from <https://www.afrocritik.com/women-nigerian-comedy/>
- Freberg, K., Graham, K., McGaughey, K., & Freberg, L. A. (2011). Who are the social media influencers? A study of public perceptions of personality. *Public Relations Review*, 37(1), 90–92.
- Fredrickson, B. L., & Roberts, T. (1997). Objectification theory: Toward understanding women's lived experiences and mental health risks. *Psychology of Women Quarterly*, 21, 173–206
- Ha, L., & Yang, Y. (2022). Research about persuasive effects of social media influencers as online opinion leaders 1990–2020: A review. *International Journal of Internet Marketing and Advertising*. <https://doi.org/10.1504/IJIMA.2022.10043104>.
- Hall, P. C., West, J. H., & McIntyre, E. (2012). Female self-sexualization in myspace.com personal profile photographs. *Sexuality & Culture*, 16, 1–16. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12119-011-9095-0>.
- Ihesiulo, G. (2023, July 18). Indecent Ad: Mr Macaroni faces ARCON's scrutiny over D'General Bitters skit. Daily Times Nigeria. Retrieved, February, 12, 2024, from, <https://dailytimesng.com/indecent-ad-mr-macaroni-faces-arcons-scrutiny-over-dgeneral-bitters-skit/>.
- International Trade Administration. (2023). *Media and entertainment Nigeria – country commercial guide*. Retrieved March, 24, 2024, from <https://www.trade.gov/country-commercial-guides/nigeria-media-and-entertainment>
- Iwuoha, V. C., & Aniche, E. T. (2021). Protests and blood on the streets: Repressive State, police brutality and #EndSARS Protest in Nigeria. *Security Journal*, 1–23.
- Langton, R. (1993). Beyond a pragmatic critique of reason. *Australasian Journal of Philosophy*, 71(4), 364–384.

- Liss, M., Erchull, M. J., & Ramsey, L. R. (2011). Empowering or oppressing? Development and exploration of the enjoyment of sexualization scale. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, 37(1), 55–68. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0146167210386119>.
- McCarthy, B. (2022). ‘Who unlocked the kitchen?’: Online misogyny, YouTube comments and women’s professional street skateboarding. *International Review for the Sociology of Sport*, 57(3), 362–380. <https://doi.org/10.1177/10126902211021509>
- Migiro, S. O., & Magangi, B. A. (2011). Mixed methods: A review of literature and the future of the new research paradigm. *African Journal of Business Management*, 5(10), 3757–3764.
- Odukoya, K. A. (2017). Sexualization of women in Nigerian magazine advertisements. *International Journal of Humanities and Social Sciences*, 11(1), 283–286.
- Odutuyo, A. (2021, April 14). *15 Popular Skit-Makers with Highest Instagram Followers, Broda Shaggi, Leads with 7.5 million Fans* Legit. Retrieved December 7, 2021, from <https://www.legit.ng/1411262-12-popular-skit-makers-highest-instagram-followers-brodashaggi-leads-75-million-fans.html>.
- Ojomo, O., & Sodeinde, O. A. (2021). Social media skits: Reshaping the entertainment experience of broadcast audience. *SAGE Open*, 11(3). <https://doi.org/10.1177/21582440211032176>.
- Oladipupo, I. (2022, November 23). *Exposed: How Instagram Comedian Bae U Sleeps with Girls for Skit Roles [Screenshots]* TopNaija. Retrieved from <https://topnaija.ng/exposed-how-instagramcomedian-bae-u-sleeps-with-girls-for-skit-roles/>.
- Oni, M. (2023, July 29). *Over-sexualization: The new inspiration for content creation (skit making) in Nigeria*. LinkedIn. Retrieved, February 12, 2024, from <https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/over-sexualization-new-inspiration-content-creation-skit-mariam-oni/>.
- Papadaki, E. (Lina) (n.d.). Feminist Perspectives on Objectification. In *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Spring 2021 Edition), E. N. Zalta (Ed.), Retrieved December 7, from <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/spr2021/entries/feminism-objectification/>.
- Stroud, N. J., & Joyce, V. M. (2015). Content analysis. In S. Zhou, & W. D. Sloan (Eds.), *Research methods in Communication* (3rd ed., pp. 119–136). Vision.
- Stroud, N. J., & Joyce, V. M. (2017). Content analysis. In S. Zhou & W. D. Sloan (Eds.), *Research methods in communication* (3rd ed., pp. 119–136). Vision Press.
- Swift, J., & Gould, H. (2021, January 11). *Not an Object: On Sexualization and Exploitation of Women and Girls*. UNICEF USA. Retrieved December 8, 2021, from <https://www.unicefusa.org/stories/not-object-sexualization-and-exploitation-women-andgirls/30366>.
- Szymanski, D. M., Moffitt, L. B., & Carr, E. R. (2011). Sexual objectification of women: Advances to theory and research. *The Counseling Psychologist*, 39(1), 6–38.
- Tashakkori, A., & Creswell, J. W. (2007). Editorial: The New era of mixed methods. *Journal of Mixed Methods Research*, 1(1), 3–7. <https://doi.org/10.1177/2345678906293042>.
- Van Leeuwen, T., & Jewitt, C. (Eds.). (2001). *The handbook of visual analysis*. Sage.
- Vanbuskirk, S. (2021, September 11). *What Is the Male Gaze?* Verywell Mind. Retrieved December 9, 2021, from <https://www.verywellmind.com/what-is-the-male-gaze-5118422>.
- Ward, L. M. (2016). Media and sexualization: State of empirical research, 1995–2015. *The Journal of Sex Research*, 53(4–5), 560–577.
- Wood, J. T. (1994). Gendered media: The influence of media on views of gender. *Gendered Lives: Communication Gender and Culture*, 9, 231–244.
- Yeku, J. (2021, April 20). *Instagram comedy and the shadow of Nollywood*. James Yékú. Retrieved from <https://www.google.com/amp/s/jamesyeku.com/2021/03/04/instagram-comedy-the-extension-of-nollywood/>.