

VIEWERS' PERCEPTION OF FEMALE NEWSREADERS' APPEARANCE ON TELEVISION AND ITS INFLUENCE ON ATTENTION TO NEWS

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Abstract

News presentation is the heart of news stations. Newsreaders or casters are trained to present news to heterogeneous audience. Many of television stations use young beautiful female newsreaders to cast their news. The physical appearance of the female newsreader may either attract viewers' attention to the news or not. The appearance of the female newsreader is viewed with different perceptions by millions of various viewing audiences. This study examines viewers' perception of female newsreaders' appearance on television and its influence on news attention. The study was anchored on social perception theory, which explains how people form impressions of and make inferences about other people. In order to determine this, two research approaches were adopted: research assistants rating scale and viewers' rating scale (VRS). The categories studied on female newsreader physical appearance were dress or attire, hairstyle, makeup/facial expression and voice quality. Three cable television stations were viewed. They were the Nigerian Television Authority (NTA); Channels Television and African Independent Television (AIT). The Krejcie Robert and Morgan Daryle sample size of 384 was adopted. However, 382 of the sample size were retrieved. Results showed that female newsreaders' appearance affects viewers' attention to news at the first few minutes of the news. While the female viewers are attracted to the general physical appearance, male viewers are attracted to facial beauty. The import of this is that physical appearance of a female newsreader distracts attention from the news if sexual appealing looks were applied. A moderate appearance was recommended for female newsreader.

Keywords: Appearance; Attention; Female Newsreaders; Viewer's Perception

Introduction

Newsreaders or casters are trained to present news to heterogeneous audience. While radio newsreaders have only voice to present, television

newsreaders have not only voice but also physical appearance to present, especially female newscasters. Studies on physical appearance of newscasters have drawn attention since the 1970's (Miller & Rivenbark,

1970; Byrne, Ervin, & Lamberth, 1970; Berscheid, Dion, Walster, & Walster, 1971; as cited in Cundy, 1980). Studies have been done on television newsreaders' physical appearance especially female newsreaders (Shea, 1985; Steels, 2006; Candice, 2013) and its effect on viewers' attention to news (Garbe & Samson, 2011; Jennie, 2011; Ford, 2013; Omar & Griselda, 2014). Shea (1985) had observed in his study that viewers of television news tend to retain more when the newscaster is properly dressed. Properly dressed invariably is physical attractiveness. Steels (2006) had shown that physical appearance is often part of communication and presentation skills. A study carried out by Garbe and Samson (2011) revealed that women newscasters are offended that all their viewers make more comments on their appearance or attire rather than the news itself. This implies that female newsreaders' physical appearance could attract viewers' attention to the newsreader. The findings of Garbe and Samson were in consonance with that of Norman (1970) who about 45 years ago, found out that attractive communicators were more effective in changing audiences' minds about news than experts' source.

Physical appearance of a newsreader is one of the attributes considered as potentially linked with credibility of news (Cundy, 1980). This attribute as Cundy noted, has a particularly strong impact on impression formation. People perceive attractive individuals as more curious, complex, perceptive, careful, and these are associated with the credibility of news, just like physical appearance or beauty is often used in advertising to attract attention and patronage (Ramirez and Reichert, 2000). There are studies to show that female newsreaders attract attention to news listenership (Holland, 1987; Clausen, 2004; Weibel, Wissmath & Groner, 2008 in Mitra, Webb & Wolfe, 2014). Holland's argument was that female newsreaders have been constructed as pleasurable objects for men to look at. This is still the case almost 60 years after the first female television

newsreader appeared on British television. Holland (1987) further observed that women newsreaders were seen as objects for jokes, pictures and suggestive comments. Holland as well observed that every detail of female newsreaders' dress and appearance was commented on, their styles were compared, their sexuality stressed by viewers. This shows that newsreaders' appearance had really drawn viewers' attention.

Physical appearance is an important attribute of physical attractiveness in the mainstream media especially television. Because television is still the medium that provides news for a majority of audience as its features of sounds and images are appealing and persuasive, there is a strong case for continuous exploration of the ideologies of beauty underlying the selection of its newsreaders (Mitra, Webb & Wolfe, 2014). Television tends to present an image of femininity focusing on visual appearance (Wykes and Gunter 2005), and indeed emphasises appearance above other qualities (Hamermesh and Biddle 1994) including news. Organisations including broadcasting institutions as Mitra et al. (2014) noted, promote idealised images of women, a glamorised version of attractiveness through employing women with the 'right look' (Warhurst & Nickson 2009:385) and sex appeal (Chambers, Steiner and Fleming, 2004). Furthermore, television news casting is an area that focuses on physical appearance (Engstrom & Ferri, 2001), this is particularly the case for female newsreaders (Cash and Brown, 1989; the above authors in this paragraph were cited from Mitra et al. 2014). This explains the importance of physical attractiveness or beauty in news reading.

Newsreader's choice of clothes, colours, hairstyle, lipstick, make-ups and facial expression, necklaces or jewelry as well as other items that make up the appearances, also can be sources of distraction or attraction to audience attention to the news. A female newsreader's physical appearance has a way of

changing viewer's attitude towards the information being sent out.

Objectives of the Study

- (1) To unravel viewers' perception of female newsreaders' appearance on television.
- (2) To ascertain whether the physical appearance of female newsreaders affect viewers' attention to the news.
- (3) To know whether the physical appearance or attire of female newsreaders distract viewers' attention to the news.

Research Questions

Arising from the above, the central questions therefore, in this study are:

- (1) What are viewers' perceptions of female newsreaders' appearance on television?
- (2) Does physical appearance of the female newsreaders affect viewers' attention to the news?
- (3) Does physical appearance or attire of female newsreaders distract viewers' attention and attitude towards news message?

The determination of viewers' perceptions of female newsreaders' appearance on television and its influence attention to news is the aimed of this study. Using empirical research approaches, the study intends to determine these questions.

Literature Review

Several studies on physical appearance of female newsreaders have been carried out by various researchers. This study focused on the review of these studies.

Newscaster Physical Appearance

Physical appearance is one of the attributes of a newsreader as he or she appears on television. Because of the features of sounds and images, television is very attractive to watch and

emotionally appealing. A number of studies have shown that news reading on television is associated with attractive people (Miller & Rovenbank, 1999; Guise, Pollans & Turkat, 2002; Cash & Soloway, 2005; Jenner, 2011). A study found out that female newscasters attract positive attention to audience (Joseph, 1982, in Cash & Soloway, 1982). There could be a number of factors responsible for this and they are the voice, facial expression, attire and physical appearance. The result of the study showed that physical appearance increases audience attention to news. This was the views of male viewers. This is why Garbe and Samson (2011) argued that emphasis on the sexual attractiveness of female news anchors distract memory formation of news content. They found out that female test subjects were shown to have encoded more news information presented by the sexualized than the unsexualized anchor condition. Garbe and Samson study further showed that female news anchor succumb to pressures to dress in a more sexually alluring manner. The study also supports the concerns of many female journalists who had faced gender discrimination as they get older in a news industry that disfavour aging women anchors.

The newsreader is the media organisation's face and voice. So, he or she represents the station's marketing goals and therefore, physical appearance matters a lot. For this reason, Jennie (2011) observed that different news stations have different strategies to attract their audience. Thus, young female newsreaders are used because of their beauty and are often belittled as they are glamourised or sexualized (Mitra et al; 2014). For example, apart from the Nigerian Television Authority (NTA) that uses middle-age women most times as news readers, and now, young women, other stations like African Independent Television (AIT), Channels Television as well as Silverbird Television mainly employed young, energetic and beautiful women as news readers. As the saying goes: Beauty sells! Mitra et al (2014) observed that many media

organisations want people with “cute faces and cute bottoms”. Modern media organisations are more concerned about physical looks and appearance on television than professional ability. The phrase 'journalistic damsels', noted by Allan (1999:130 in Mitra et al: 2014), aptly encapsulates the dual selection and performance criteria which evidently apply to women.

Attitude of Viewers towards Newsreader's Physical Appearance

There are empirical findings of television viewers' perception and attitude towards newsreaders appearance. For example, in an interview, Mitra et al.(2014) found out that 76% of the interviewees (respondents) showed that the notions of age and youth are associated with those of beauty. In the interviews, one person commented: 'they are chosen for their looks and beauty and this is one of the reasons why you only see young female presenters. You rarely see an old woman presenting the news' (p.49). The study also showed that viewers were more concerned about newsreaders been able to do their job rather than they were about their appearance. When asked whether female newsreaders should be attractive, only 25% of female respondents and 28% of male respondents responded in the positive. Their (Mitra et al.: 2014) showed that the majority of people tuned to the news to see the news itself. This however challenges the notion that the audience for television news tune to the news to see attractive newsreaders. In the study, there were some viewers or respondents who thought that physical attractiveness was a desirable quality for newsreaders. There were gender differences in such responses. Of all female respondents, 21% suggested that male newsreaders should be attractive and 25% suggested that female newsreaders should be. On the other hand, of the male respondents, a much smaller 6% thought that male newsreaders should be attractive, whereas 28% of these male respondents suggested that female newsreaders should be. However, for

the oldest age category (61 and above), nearly half the respondents (47%) thought that female newsreaders should be attractive. When this was broken down by gender, it was found that more males expressed a desire to see attractive female newsreaders whereas females usually expressed a desire to see attractive male newsreaders. As this was the only age group where this preference for attractive newsreaders was apparent, therefore, most of the audience who watched television news did not have a strong preference about whether the newsreaders were attractive.

This differs from what appears to be assumed by the industry (Wolfe and Mitra, 2012).

In their submission of attitude of viewers towards television newsreader's appearance, Mitra et al. (2014) observed that television viewers showed a particularly dismissive attitude towards the over-glamourisation and sexualisation of women newsreaders. As it were, when female newsreaders are selected for or required to display such qualities, it harms their credibility as professionals. Female newsreaders tend to be taken less seriously and this might actually be damaging for their careers as it pigeonholes them into a certain type of femininity and one that tends to be relational to men (Matheson, 2005: 80). This confirms some of the suggestions that although, physical attractiveness is sometimes positively correlated with intelligence (Haas & Gregory, 2005; Kanazawa & Kovar, 2004), sexualisation has a negative correlation with intelligence.

A number of variables can affect audience's perceptions of a newscaster appearance. These variables include camera angle, the newscaster posture and position, skin complexion, dress/attire, makeup, hairstyles, facial expression and vocal quality. All these can determine viewers' perception of a newscaster and attention to the news. Physical attractiveness clearly plays an important role in shaping the way individuals interact with one another. People tend to act favourably towards

the attractive, and this is applicable to newsreaders. Basically, all news stations employ young beautiful and handsome individuals as newsreader with the best vocal quality.

Factors influencing Newsreader Choice of Attire

There are various factors that influence newsreader's choice of attire. Cultural/Environmental factor is one of them. Cultural beliefs and background of the media location can influence the choice of dress and appearance of a newsreader. For instance, most of the newsreaders in Nigeria put on native dress and at times appear in suits and blouse due to the media environment. The Nigeria Television Authority ((NTA) since its establishment in 1976 made it an in-house policy for newscasters to appear in native attire but in 2015, the policy changed. NTA newscasters now wear suits for both male and female to meet with modern trends. This no longer reflects the multi-cultural settings in Nigeria which NTA claims to portray.

Religious factor also contributes towards a newsreader's choice of appearance. In the northern part of Nigeria where Islamic religion is dominant, a Muslim newsreader is expected to reflect the religion in appearance by wearing hijab when reading news.

Other major factors include remuneration and allowances, house style policy and social class. There is no doubt that the level of individual socialization and class group will go a long way in influencing how to dress and make-up. It is noted that a sociable person appear attractive than someone not sociable. Basically, appearance of a newsreader on television largely depends on the station's policy.

Theoretical Framework

The study adopted the Social Perception Theory and other theoretical constructs under the theory. Social perception is the study of how people form impressions of and make inferences about other people. We learn about other's feelings and emotions by picking up on information we gather from verbal and nonverbal communication which includes physical appearance. Facial expressions, tone of voice, hand gestures, and body position are just a few examples of ways people communicate nonverbally. The theory was put together by Fritz Heider in the 20th century.

An important term to understand when talking about Social Perception is Attribution. This leads to Attribution theoretical construct. Attribution is attaching or explaining a person's behaviour to some source or personality in which he/she is acting. Most importantly, social perception is shaped by individual's motivation at the time, their emotions, and their cognitive load capacity. All of these combined determine how people attribute certain traits and how those traits are interpreted.

Attribution helps individuals understand and rationalize the behaviour of others through the use of information gathered by observation. Psychological research into attribution began with the work of Fritz Heider in the early part of the 20th century, and subsequently developed by others such as Harold Kelley and Bernard Weiner (Kelly & Michela, 1980; Smith & Mackie, 2000). People make attributions to understand the world around them in order to seek reasons for a particular individual's behaviour. When people make attributions they are able to make judgments as to what was the cause of certain behaviour. It seeks to understand how people attach meaning to others' behaviour or our own.

This is called attribution theoretical construct. Attribution in the sociology parlance deals with how people use information to explain events. It examines what information is gathered and how it is combined to form a causal judgment. Attribution is concerned with how and why ordinary people explain events as they do (McLeod, 2010).

In the light of this study, social perception theory holds that television viewers make judgment of what they see and perceived of newsreader's appearance. It explains how television audience attached various meanings to newsreader's attire, and how they make a world around them. Viewers make attribute or judgment on female newsreaders' looks based on what they perceived. As it were, television viewers attribute different interpretations to newsreaders physical appearance.

Social perception theory is closely linked to Identification Postulation of Social Cognitive Theory. Identification allows the observer (here the television viewer) to feel a one-on-one similarity with the model (here the female newsreader), and can thus lead to a higher chance of the observer following through with the model's action or physical appearance. People are more likely to follow behaviours modeled by someone with whom they can identify with. For example, some viewers have designed dress or blouses they see in a newscaster. Summarily, social perception theory explains how television audience/viewers construct meanings from what they see, hear or read and what attribution they make to media texts. It involves looking at the ways social phenomena are created, institutionalized, known and made into tradition by humans. Female newsreader's physical appearance on television is used in this case. Television viewers could make

meanings or make attributions to what female newsreader wear while reading news.

Research Method

The study employed survey research method. The study used both Research Assistants Rating Scale (RARS) and Viewers/Respondents' RatingScale(V/RRS) on television female newsreaders' physical appearance. The study selected 24 research assistants who are final year undergraduates from the department of Mass Communication in Delta State University, Abraka. Out of the 24 research assistants, 16 are females while the remaining 8 are males. They double as participant observers in the study. They were purposively selected in this study because of their vast knowledge on the subject matter of the study. They are to watch and observe female newsreaders physical appearance on television for four (4) weeks and record their observations. Also, using Krejcie Robert and Morgan Daryle sample size suggestion, 384 Warri metropolis residents were drawn as respondents and sample size for the study.

The study as well selected three news cable stations identified as the best in Nigeria in news programmes, not only by the research assistants but also by majority of the respondents. This was based on their news coverage and programming. The television stations are the Nigerian Television Authority (NTA); Channels Television and the African Independent Television (AIT). NTA is a federal government-owned station, self acclaimed as the largest television station/channel in Africa. The station was established in April 1, 1977 under Decree 24. The African Independent Television (AIT) was established in 1994 and Channels Television was established almost the same year with AIT. As at 2015, Channels

Television remains the best television for the 9th time by the National Broadcasting Commission (NBC), an award the station won back to back. The three stations remain on top in the list of news coverage in Nigeria. This formed the reason for their selection for the study. The research assistants are to watch these television stations and to specifically determine the items of the physical appearance of their female newsreaders.

******Research Assistants' Approach******

Twenty four (24) undergraduate final year students from the Department of Mass Communication of the Delta State University, Abraka were randomly selected as Research Assistants. Their function was to observe female newsreaders' appearance within period of four weeks. There was no empirical or theoretical reason for selecting 24 research assistants, as it was agreed by the entire class as adequate. Sixteen (16) of the 24 research assistants were females while eight (8) were males. This was agreed by the Class as the topic is more associated with feminine.

The 24 research assistants under four weeks period during school vacations were to watch female newsreaders' physical appearance or attire on cable news stations only in Nigeria under the Direct Satellite Television (DSTV). DSTV is largely accepted as the best Television Cable Service Provided in Nigeria in every ramification of television cable services.

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Items Considered as Part of Physical Appearance of Female Newsreaders

What the research assistants were expected to determine and know on female newsreaders physical appearance in the three (3) selected news stations were grouped into five (5) categories. These were:

- Dress or Attire
- Hairstyle
- Makeup
- Facial Expression
- Voice Quality

Invariably, these are both verbal and non-verbal communications.

It should be noted that codes were assigned to the description of the physical appearance as agreed by both the researcher and the research assistants (please note that this does not in any way accord negative or derogatory description to female newsreaders). A physical appearance that is considered as

sexually appealing was coded Sexually Attractive (SA). If it is attractive but not sexually appealing, it is coded Attractive (A). A female newsreader may be coded Elegant or Glamourous (EG) when the attire or dress is 'overwhelming' (in this study we consider 'Elegant' when the combination of attire and colours as well as other items attract much more viewers' attention to the female newsreader rather than the news itself). Both sexually attractive and glamorous were agreed by the Group as distracting to the viewers and this was coded as Distractive (D). A female newsreader's appearance could be Moderate when her physical appearance from the dress to the facial applications, hair-gear, blouse design, hairstyles, lipstick etc is simple. What was considered 'simple' or not was determined by the 16 female Research Assistants and it was agreed by the Class.

Dress/Attire Category

Under dress or attire category, we have:

- § Loose or tight blouse or top (whether English or native): The style or design of the blouse or top also follows in this category. For example, if the top or blouse brings out the female newsreader's breast or if the top is 'body shape', it is coded as SA.
- § Colour or colour combination of the top/blouse: Colours attract and this should be looked out for especially the combination and sharp colours.
- § Jacket/Suit: Some designer suit depending on the design could attract viewers' attention.
- § Necklace: This could be Gold-like or silver-like necklace and coral beads. Necklace is a centre of attraction for a woman, hence it was included.

Size of the necklace or beads were also considered because big sizes could be distracting

Colours of the necklace: Gold and silver necklaces and designers' colour beads were included in the items of appearance.

Earrings: Earrings may be big and dangling or small and simple. A big and dangling earring or the gold and silver make could cause attention.

Hair-gear or hair-tie: This is for native attire.

Combinations of Hair-gears: The research assistants were to look for female newsreader that combined hair-ties with different colours. Also included in this group was neck-wear such scarves and other cloths worn around the neck.

Style of the Hair-gear: Hair-gear styles attract female viewers and so it was included.

Eye Glasses: The research assistants were to identify eye glasses that could be coded sexually attractive or not.

Hairstyle Category

The hair category was assigned to the 16 female research assistants. Under this we have:

- § Hairstyle: A woman's hair is her glory. Female newsreaders are not left out. Certain hairstyle of female newsreader could attract female viewers. The female research assistants were to identify the hairstyles that attract viewers' attention.
- § Hair types: Hair types here refer to artificial or manufactured hair like Virgin hair, Baby hair, Caribbean hair, Indian hair and many others. The 16

female research assistants were to determine how hair types affect female viewers' attention.

§ Hair colour: The research assistants were to determine whether female newsreader's hair colour like blonde, red or wine and any other colour could affect viewers' attention to the news.

§ Hair size: Sizes of hair whether long, short or average of a female newsreader and its relationship to viewers' attention to news were to be determined by the research assistants.

Makeup/Facial Application Category

Under this category, what the research assistants were to look out for were:

§ Lipsticks colour (red and pink colour could very appealing to the eyes)

§ Eye-lash application and the colour

§ Eye-brow application and the colour

§ Eye-shadow application, and

§ General facial application

Facial Expression Category

Items under facial expression include:

§ A cheerful/bright or 'stony' face

§ Eyes contact with the viewers through the camera

Human face carries a lot of meanings and messages. So does the female newsreader. The viewers could read meanings to her face. The research assistants were to determine whether viewers' could be affected by female newsreader's facial expression.

Voice Category

The research assistants were to look out for a voice that is charming or not. This however was not a strong factor or category.

In all these categories, the research assistants were to note items that were considered as Sexually Attractive, Attractive, Moderate, Distractive or Elegant among others. They were to rate these categories. They were given the Viewers' Rating Scale 1 (VRS), the same scale administered to the respondents. Theirs was to watch, listen and make observations on the female newsreaders and to score them accordingly.

Findings from the two (2) categories of respondents, that is, Research Assistants and Sampled Warri Metropolis Residents, are hereby recorded below which also provide answers to the research questions.

Findings from Research Assistants Rating

The results obtained by the Research Assistants/Group were collated and analysed. Results of the observations made by the twenty-four (24) Research Assistants on Female Newsreaders' Appearance on television within the four (4) weeks period showed the followings:

In the area of blouse or top, the NTA female newsreaders in many appearances were coded by the Research Assistants as Moderate while that of Channel Television and AIT were coded as Attractive and Elegant but few cases were Moderate. This was agreed by 19 members of the Group. This represented 79.2% of the Research Assistants. In the style or design of the blouse, all the female newsreaders in the stations under study were coded Moderate except in few instances when young female newsreader like Anne Nwachiboh of Channels Television wore appealing top based on the style and colour. Younger female newsreaders were observed by the Group to be more appealing than older female newsreaders. Though AIT's dress policy for staff is purely

native attire, the style of the blouse has never been decided by the television station. This was perhaps why 17 (representing 70.8%) of the Research Assistants coded hair-gear or tie for AIT female newsreader in most cases as Distractive and Elegant while 8 of them (representing 33.3%) coded the hair-gear as Moderate. Channel Television has always maintained corporate wears which does not belong to this category. The seventeen (17) Research Assistants believed that elegant hair-gear style affects viewers' attention to the news, especially female viewers. One of the female Research Assistants specifically questioned some female television viewers on the subject. One of the respondents' replied that 'some female newsreaders appear on television to show off their wears whether blouse or hair-gear. You can find this among female newsreaders from the south-west and south-south where hair-gear is a thing of great fashion due to cultural beliefs'. Another woman said that she had seen and copied different hair-gear styles from 'celebrity' female newscasters. She sees female newsreaders as celebrities.

Necklaces of the female newsreaders as observed by the Research Assistants were coded moderate and simple. On the contrary, culture beads and other kinds of beads worn were considered as Elegant, Distractive and Sexually Appealing. This was observed by 21 Research Assistants. This represented 87.5%. Culture beads as observed by 21 Research Assistants attract virtually female viewers' attention. The design of the culture beads, the size, the colour and all the aesthetics make it attractive to the eyes of the viewers. Hence, it was considered as Distractive to news viewership.

Earrings of the female newsreaders were other items that the Research Assistants

observed. This was because big and dangling earrings, gold or silver-like earrings could attract female viewers' attention. Result of this showed that simple and moderate earrings wereworn by the female newsreaders as observed by all the Research Assistants within the period under study. In many cases, female newsreader earrings were covered by their long hair. Though viewers may be attracted to a female newsreader's earrings, the study does not see it as strong factor to viewers' distraction to news itself.

A woman's hair is her glory. Female newsreaders on AIT wear native clothes as in-house policy. This means wearing hair-gear also except on few occasions. However, different hair-styles known among women were worn by the female newsreaders as observed by the female Research Assistants. None of these hair-styles according to the female research assistants were considered as Sexually Attractive or Appealing or Distractive. Attractive and long hairs were observed among young female newsreaders. The young female newsreaders often wear Virgin hair, Caribbean hair, Indian hair, Brazilian hair, Baby hair, and other different types of costly hair. The sixteen (16) female Research Assistants believed that hair styles and types are very strong factor for news distraction among female television viewers. These Research Assistants observed that 83.4% of their respondents or viewers questioned on this issue agreed that they spent few minutes of the news time in admiring and analyzing the female newsreader's hair type and style. This therefore was taken as Distractive to news attention especially for women audiences.

A moderate make-up or facial applications were observed among NTA

female newsreaders like Elizabeth Banu, Becky Modujuwu, Aisha Bello Mustapha and other female newsreaders were noted for their moderate facial applications. Perhaps it is an in-house policy. Attractive facial application was observed in the Channels Television and AIT female newsreaders. Amarachi Ubani of Channels Television was known for her sharp lipstick and Melinda of AIT was known for her native attire and beautiful looks. Young Emana Amawhe of Channels Television was acknowledged by all the Research Assistants as the most beautiful and attractive female newscaster in all the three stations under the study period. This was based on her looks, facial or charming expression and facial applications. Facial applications in this study were lipstick, eye-lash, eye-brow, eye-shadow and general applications in the face.

Facial expression of female newsreaders was also ascertained. Factors for observation were cheerful expression or the opposite during news reading and manner of eyes contact with the camera. All the Research Assistants affirmed a cheerful expression. However, young female newsreaders' eyes contact with the camera were said to be appealing to young male television viewers. This was observed by five (5) male Research Assistants. This number (5 male research assistants representing 20.8%) was inadequate to firmly agree that female newsreader manner of eyes contact with the camera can suggest sexually appealing to some male viewers. Voice quality was confirmed to be charming and attractive among all the female newsreaders.

It should be noted that six of the eight male Research Assistants admitted that young female newsreaders were sexually appealing to them. They like admiring them whenever they

see these young and attractive female newsreaders. This distracts their attention to the news. We draw from this experience that 25% of male television viewers spend their first few minutes in admiring the beauty of young female newsreaders. Beauty attracts their attention for the first few minutes of the news. Young female newsreaders were sexually appealing to male viewers especially the young ones.

It is suffice to say that the NTA female newsreaders appeared to be more moderate in their physical appearance than Channel television and AIT female newsreaders. Female newsreaders in private television stations appeared to be attractive and sexually appealing in their physical appearance than those in government television stations. Younger female newsreaders as the study showed happened to be in this category of appealing to the eyes and mind than the ears of their viewers especially young male viewers.

This implies that young male television viewers are distracted from the news itself because of the 'sexual appeal' of physical appearance of young female newsreaders. Though female newsreaders' physical appearance does not wholly distract the attention of viewers from the news, it does however hold their attention to the admiration of the female newsreaders for the first few minutes (this however depends on the viewer). The Research Assistants observed that 'Moderate' appearance does not really affect viewers' attention to the news (moderate appearance was taken in this study as simple in blouse, facial application and other aspects). Young female newsreaders are mostly used for news casting than older ones. This is because younger female newsreaders are more sexually appealing than older ones. Beauty sells! Under

the four (4) weeks period of the study, the Research Assistants discovered in their counting that out of the 30 days (in September 2014) that make up the month, young female newsreaders in the three selected stations under study appeared for at least nineteen (19) times on daily basis than older female newsreaders. This represented 63.3%. Invariably, 63.3% of news readings were done by young female newsreaders. This was largely observed in the private stations (Channel Television and AIT). Some female viewers got distracted also because they spent time admiring and analyzing the dress pattern and other items about the appearance of the female newsreader. Some female television viewers copy fashion trends from these female newsreaders. A newsreader in the mind of the average Nigerian television viewer is a celebrity. This is the perception of the public on the appearance of female newsreaders. Celebrities' lives influence many young people socially. This mindset of the average Nigerian television viewer is that a female newsreader is a celebrity and as such should be copied in fashion trends. Therefore, it can be concluded that female newsreaders' appearance affects mainly their female viewers' attention to the news.

Viewers/Respondents' Rating Scale (VRS)

The VRS was a questionnaire filled by respondents who were regular viewers of the news broadcast of the selected television stations: NTA; Channels Television; and AIT. The respondents are in Warri metropolis in Warri South Local Government Area of Delta state. The population of Warri South Local Government Area in Delta State, Nigeria as at the 2006 National Population Census was 311,970 (www.population.gov.ng and www.nigerianstat.gov.ng). The Krejcie Robert

and Morgan Daryle (1970) sample size was adopted. According to the Krejcie Robert and Morgan Daryle, 384 was the sample size for a given study whose population is 100,000 and above. Since the sampling population exceeds one hundred thousand (100,000), the sample size was therefore 384. The copies of the questionnaire (384) were purposively administered by the same 24 research assistants to viewers/respondents in their various homes in Warri where DSTV dish was installed. However, three hundred and seventy three (382) copies of the questionnaire were duly returned and found usable for the study. This represented 97.4% of the questionnaire returned.

It should be noted that these categories: Facial Expression and Voice Quality were not included in respondents'/viewers' rating scale, because it was solely meant for research assistants who were trained for these categories. Facial expression and voice quality were considered to be technical and complicated for the average viewers/respondents. So it was left for the 24 research assistants as has been discussed above.

Findings from Viewers/Respondents' Rating Scale

Using a simple mathematical count as technique of analysis, item 1 of Table 1 showed that 142 of the viewers/respondents rated the blouses (loose or tight) worn by female newsreaders as moderate implying not sexually appealing. On female newsreaders' style/design of the blouse/top, many of the viewers/respondents indicated that it was attractive (140) and moderate (141) respectively. Colour Combinations of blouse/top of many of the female newsreaders'

were considered attractive by 169 of the 373 of the viewers/respondents. On hair-gear/hair-tie style of the female newsreaders' with native wears, 172 of the viewers/respondents agreed that it was moderate. Also, a moderate result was obtained for necklace/beads size worn by female newsreaders. This was affirmed by 193 of the viewers/respondents. This was the same for earring sizes and colours, where 149 of the viewers/respondents affirmed to moderate appeal.

On hairstyles, hair colour (s) and sizes, moderate results were obtained except in hair types, quality and cost, where 167 of the viewers/respondents, being the highest indicated elegant, meaning in this context, when the combination of attire and colours as well as other items attract much more viewers' attention to the female newsreader than the news itself.

Viewers/Respondents were also asked to indicate their views about makeup and facial application of female newsreaders by indicating the options provided that best suit their views. The categories of facial application were lipstick colour; eye-lash application; eye-brow application; eye-shadow application and general facial application were considered as moderate in their appearance except eye-lash application that, 165 of the viewers/respondents indicated attractive and appealing to the sexual sensory. It can be concluded that female newsreaders appeared in moderate appearances in many of their news readings. This implies fewer sexual appearances were seen in female newsreaders.

Results from Table 2 showed that in item 6, at a mean ($3.64 > 3.00$) and ($0.64 > 0.50$) viewers/respondents' agreed that the physical appearance of female newsreader distracts their attention from the news because of their

makeup. This was a case of what some viewers/respondents' considered as excessive makeup. At a mean point at $4.15 > 3.00$, viewers/respondents' agreed that young and charming female newsreaders increase their attention to the news. This means young female newsreaders attract attention to the news. This result affirms the findings of the 24 research assistants on the same issue. 241 viewers/respondents' representing 63.2% sometimes spent few minutes admiring and analyzing the looks of female newsreader before remembering to listen to the news. The mean point for this result was 3.56. This is considered as distraction from the subject which is the news itself, to the object which is the female newsreader. The above result contradicts what was obtained in item 9 of Table 2 that physical appearance of female newsreader does not in any way affect viewers/respondents' attention to the news. The mean result for this was 3.31 while the standard deviation result was $0.31 < 0.50$. By implication, a considerable number of the viewers/respondents (45.5%) slightly below 50% did not affirm to the statement made. The result obtained here was not adequate enough to accept that physical appearance of female newsreader does not in any way affect viewers/respondents' attention to the news. By percentage analysis, 50% of the viewers/respondents believe that physical appearance of female newsreader especially younger one affects viewers/respondents' attention to the news.

This was observed in item 8 of Table 2 where 63.2% of the viewers/respondents sometimes spend few minutes admiring and analyzing the appearance of female newsreaders before remembering to listen to the news. The result corresponds with the result

obtained in item 10 that at a mean point of 3.52 > 3.00, viewers/respondents have commented on female newsreader's appearance during the news. However, at a mean point at 2.78 < 3.00 and standard deviation of 0.22, viewers/respondents have not made a dress they admired from female newsreader as shown in item 11 of Table 2. As obtained in item 12, the sex of a newsreader matters to viewers/respondents (3.90 > 3.00). This means many of the viewers/respondents prefer female newsreader. For the female viewers/respondents, the dress, hair and facial applications matter while for the male viewers/respondents the sexual beauty or physical looks matters to them. This result finds credence with some other studies that

news reading on television was associated with attractive people (Miller & Rovenbank, 1999; Guise, Pollans & Turkat, 2002; Cash & Soloway, 2005; Jenner, 2011). Another study found out that female newscasters attract positive attention to viewers/audience (Joseph, 1982, in Cash & Soloway). This could be due to factors namely: voice, facial expression, attire and physical appearance. In the same vein, the age of the female newsreader is not important to the viewers/audience. What is important is the news itself.

Table 1: Viewers'/Respondents' Rating Scale (1) on Physical Appearance of Female Television Newsreaders

S/N	Items Statement	Codes/Options Provided				Total	
		Sexually Attractive	Attractive	Moderate	Distractive		Elegant
Rate your Perception of the Physical Appearance of Female Television Newsreaders based on the codes/options provided in line with the items/statement shown below.							
1.	Dress/Attire						
	Loose or tight blouse/top	46	94	142	14	77	373
	Style/Design of the blouse/top	33	140	141	17	42	373
	Colour Combination of dress	0	169	107	31	66	373
	Hair-gear/Hair-tie style	0	28	172	27	146	373
	Necklace/Beads size	0	52	193	34	94	373
	Earring size & colours	27	31	149	133	33	373
2.	Hair						
	Hairstyle	24	135	156	20	38	373
	Hair colour (s)	21	138	197	0	17	373
	Hair type, quality & cost	26	47	133	0	167	373
	Hair size	0	78	199	0	96	373
3.	Makeup/Facial Application						
	Lipstick colour	38	110	165	38	22	373
	Eye-lash application	32	142	106	66	27	373
	Eye-brow application	37	113	141	41	41	373
	Eye-shadow application	4	71	188	64	46	373
	General facial application	0	66	195	81	31	373

Source: Field Work, 2016.

The data obtained from the above table showed viewers/respondents' rating of physical appearance of female television newsreaders.

Newsreaders'

Keys: Strongly agree (SA); Agree (A); Undecided (UD); Disagree (D); Strongly Disagree (SD)

Table 2:Viewers' Rating Scale (2) on Physical Appearance of Female Television

S/N	Items Statement	SA	A	UD	D	SD	\bar{x}	Std. Dev.
6	Physical Appearance of a female newsreader distracts my attention to the news because of their makeup.	99	165	18	60	31	3.64	0.64
7.	Young and charming female newsreader increases my attention to listen and watch the news.	181	96	68	28	0	4.15	1.15
8	I sometimes spend few minutes analyzing and admiring the looks of newsreader before remembering to listen to the news.	94	142	34	86	17	3.56	0.56
9.	Physical appearance of a female newsreader does not in any way affect my attention to the news.	143	27	53	105	45	3.31	0.31
10.	I have commented on news reader appearance during the news.	92	149	30	67	35	3.52	0.52
11.	I have made a dress I admired from a newsreader.	41	98	15	178	41	2.78	0.22
12.	The sex of a newsreader does not matter to me.	147	127	14	77	56	3.90	0.09
13.	The age of the newsreader is not important to the audience.	132	94	14	77	56	3.45	0.45

Source: Field Work, 2016.

Set mean (\bar{x}) = 3.00; Standard Deviation =0.50.

Conclusion and Recommendations

Physical appearance is one unique aspect of female newscasters that has attracted the minds and pen of media researchers. Various television stations have dress code or policy for newsreaders especially female ones. Because the newsreader appears on television screen before millions of viewers, individual's perception and postulation on newsreader appearance matter. Different viewers form impressions and inferences about newsreaders' appearance on television.

Irrespective of previous impressions and interpretations made on female newsreaders' appearance on the selected television stations by viewers, our finding

showed that moderate (not sexual appealing) was obtained. What was considered moderate dressing for female newsreaders' appearance was coded or provided in the study. Also, female viewers spend a considerable time analyzing the physical appearance of female newsreader in the aspect of earrings, coral beads (if worn), head-gear (if worn), blouse/top design and colour, hairstyle, make-up applications as well as general looks. Male viewers as the study showed are engaged in the sexual beauty including facial fineness of female newsreaders.

The means that some viewers/respondents spend the first few minutes of news time on the physical

appearance of the female newsreader instead of the news itself. Also, suffice it to note that the average Nigerian television viewer sees newsreaders as celebrities. Television newscasters are placed in high esteem in Nigeria and other parts of the world. This is due to 'Screen Appearance' Postulation. Over the years, anyone who appears on television screen as newsreader, presenter, actor, etc is seen as a celeb. This no doubt is applicable to television newsreaders as many viewers see them as celebrities. So, their physical appearance and beauty affect viewers' attention to the news especially female viewers. This however depends on the viewers/audience.

The overall imports of the findings as a way of submission are that:

- Television viewers perceive the physical appearance of female newsreaders as moderate.
- Television viewers sometimes spend the first few minutes admiring and analyzing the physical appearance of female newsreader before remembering to watch the news.
- Physical appearance of a female newsreader distracts television viewers' attention to the news if sexually appealing looks are applied.
- Young and charming female newsreader increases attention to the news.
- Television viewers comment on female news reader's physical appearance during the news.
- Young television viewers prefer young female newsreaders because of their physical appearance.
- Attraction or Distraction to news attention however depends on the television viewer.

From the above, we therefore recommend moderate dress pattern for television female newsreaders. This means physical appearance devoid of sharp colour lipstick, colourful local beads and combination of hair-gears.

Appearance with dangling earrings and big gold or silver neck-chain should also not be allowed when casting news.

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