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# The Untold Story of Africa: What Advertising from Africa Reveals to the Rest of the World About the Continent

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THE UNTOLD STORY OF AFRICA: WHAT ADVERTISING FROM AFRICA  
REVEALS TO THE REST OF THE WORLD ABOUT THE CONTINENT

BY

RACHAEL AFOLABI

A master's thesis submitted to the Graduate Faculty in Liberal Studies in partial fulfillment of  
the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts, The City University of New York

2017

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Rachael Afolabi

This manuscript has been read and accepted for the Graduate Faculty in Liberal  
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## ABSTRACT

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by

Rachael Afolabi

Advisor: Herman Bennett

Images of skyscrapers, well-built roads, and deluxe model cars are often absent in the mindset of Western audiences when it comes to Africa. This is because the popular image of Africa in the western world is that of a backward and impoverished continent. Western media is largely responsible for this image. On the other hand, African advertising and advertising produced in Africa reveal a different image of the continent. This image focuses on the technological changes, social improvement, and modernization that are taking place in many African countries. This paper examines television and print advertising produced in different African countries for this rarely seen aspect of the continent they reveal. This examination is done using the “Reflective Hypothesis” which postulates that advertising mirrors the target community in terms of values, culture, beliefs and lifestyle. I argue that businesses in order to sell their product or services market a more sophisticated image of contemporary Africa. What western media representation of Africa does not take into account is the presence of a consumer market in the continent. This consumer market is the target of businesses both foreign and local, who traffic a

more appealing image of the continent. Although it is evident that poverty is a serious issue in the continent, a study of advertising opens up the possibilities of seeing the continent in a different light.

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# **The Untold Story of Africa: What Advertising from Africa Reveals to the Rest of the World about the Continent**

## **I. Introduction**

Many scholars both Western and African have written about the dominant image of Africa in the west. Mostly in regards to the portrayal of the continent in the framework of western media as backward and poverty stricken. Some scholars argue that this image does not accurately represent contemporary Africa, while others argue that it serves the purpose of inducing aid and compassion for the continent. There is an exhaustive body of work on this fascinating topic. The prominence of this scholarship lends significance to the study of Africa's image in general. But arguable, a more fascinating area of this study has been glossed over, that is the representation of Africa in Africa. An interesting phenomenon is observed when the popular images of Africa in the west is compared to images of Africa in African advertising and advertising in Africa. The images are so radically divergent that they provoke a number of interesting questions, that if explored may add new insights to the already extensive scholarship on the representation of Africa. What are the images of Africa in Africa? Who are responsible for these images? What purpose do these images serve? And who are the target audiences? Are some of the questions this observation raises.

In the west, the media (television, newspapers, and magazines) can be looked upon as the propagator of Africa's popular image, as noted by African scholars such as Kimani Njogu, Asgede Hagos, and L. Emeka Ogazi. By relying on western media as their source of knowledge on the African continent, western audiences perceive a definitive image that is vastly different from that mostly seen by audiences in Africa. In an effort to uncover this different image of

Africa rarely seen in the west. This paper investigates Africa's image projection through advertising. Both print and television advertising produced in different countries on the African continent are analyzed for the kinds of images and messages they convey about the continent. This analysis is done using the "Reflective Hypothesis" which postulates that in order for an advertising to be successful, it has to mirror the values, lifestyles, beliefs and culture of the community that the advertising is targeting. The analysis focuses mostly on Nigeria, as Nigeria is the most populous African country with about 300 different cultures. Relevant literatures on the representation of Africa, and advertising in Africa are examined. The hypothesis is that an analysis of advertising in Africa reveals an image of the continent that contradicts what western media distribute to its news and philanthropic audience. I argue that businesses and advertisers, in order to make consumers and sell to consumers, market a far more sophisticated image of contemporary Africa.

## **II. Literature Review**

### **a. Section 1: Africa's image in the West**

The assertion that popular narratives of Africa in the west are generally negative, have over the years been proven by research from a number of Western and African scholars. Political science scholars Peter J. Schraeder and Brian Endless who examined the portrayal of Africa by *The New York Times* between 1955 and 1995, found that the *New York Times* reporting on Africa focuses on "sensationalist and often negative aspects of the continent" and that 73% of all articles reported negatively on Africa's politics and society. In 1955 67% of the reports were negative, in 1985, 92% and in 1995, 85%.<sup>1</sup> Journalist Nicolas Kayser-Bril carried out a similar

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<sup>1</sup> Peter J. Schraeder and Brian Endless, "The Media and Africa: The Portrayal of Africa in the 'New York Times' (1955-1995)." (*Issue: A Journal of Opinion*, vol. 26, no. 2, 1998) 29.

analysis on *The Guardian* and found the generalization of Africa on this news platform problematic. He examined articles published between 2012 and 2013 and found that “Africa” is used as an “all-purpose word to describe anything from Tangiers to Cape Town.” Kayser-Bril compares the news coverage of three biggest economies in Asia to that of Africa’s. Guardian’s journalists do not use “Asia” when referring to Hyderabad or Shenzhen, instead they use “India” and “China”, and Asia was mentioned only 2, 948 times compared to Africa which was mentioned 5,443 times.<sup>2</sup>

There have been a lot of opposition from Africans in the western world to correct this generalization of Africa in the west. A great example is the 2014 “Africa is Not a Country” social media photo campaign organized by the African Students Association of New York’s Ithaca College, the campaign went viral gaining coverage on *cnn.com* and other prominent news site. The goal of the campaign is to “educate and raise awareness about the common stereotypes surrounding Africa and its people -- misunderstandings like Africa being a homogenous entity rather than a diverse continent of more than 50 countries.”<sup>3</sup> With remarkable images of their country’s flag wrapped around their bodies, the students challenged the various stereotypes about Africa. Some of the written messages in their campaign includes, “Africans do not all look alike”, “Africans don’t need to be saved”, “Africans do not all live in the desert”, “Africa is not a land filled with diseases”, “Africa is not defined by poverty” and “Africans are not primitive or backward.”<sup>4</sup>

As part of the body of work that explore the popular images of Africa in the west, African scholar John Kiarie Wa’Njogu in the book *Media and Identity in Africa*, notes that Greek

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<sup>2</sup> Nicolas Kayser-Bril, "Africa Is Not a Country." *The Guardian*. Guardian News and Media, 24 Jan. 2014.

<sup>3</sup> Teo Kermeliotis, "'Africa Is Not a Country': Campaign Dispels Stereotypes." *CNN*. Cable News Network, 07 Feb. 2014.

<sup>4</sup> Teo Kermeliotis, "'Africa Is Not a Country': Campaign Dispels Stereotypes."

historian Herodotus set the pattern for a negative representation of Africa when in *The Histories*, he refers to Africans as savages and non-human creatures in contrast to Greeks and Caucasians who were supposedly the “epitome of creation.” Wa’Njogu adds that these stereotypes were carried down through the years and were reaffirmed by Charles Darwin in his theory of Evolution in the 1800.<sup>5</sup> Darwin clearly elucidates his believe that some races were superior (favored races), and Africans were of the inferior race. In a similar manner, famed Nigerian novelist Chinua Achebe also critiqued the tendency of the west to depict Africans in a damaging manner. In the essay *An Image of Africa: Racism in Conrad’s Heart of Darkness*, Achebe notes the “need” in western psychology to set Africa up as the opposite of Europe, that is, Africa being a place of negations while Europe in comparison, a place of “spiritual grace”. Achebe criticizes Joseph Conrad’s novel *Heart of Darkness* for falling into this same pattern of setting Africa up as “the other”. Conrad’s novel is narrated by a fictitious character, an Englishman named Marlow, who recounts his voyage down the River Congo. Marlow describes Africans as “nothing but black shadows of disease and starvation.” According to Achebe, *Heart of Darkness* “projects the image of Africa as the other world, the antithesis of Europe and therefore of civilization, a place where man’s vaunted intelligence and refinement are finally mocked by triumphant bestiality.”<sup>6</sup> Achebe further point out that “Conrad saw and condemned the evil of imperial exploitation but was strangely unaware of the racism on which it sharpened its iron tooth.”<sup>7</sup> Acclaimed Nigerian writer Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, in her 2009 *Ted Talk* about “the danger of a single story” traces back the representation of Africa in the west to previous centuries, noting how in 1561,

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<sup>5</sup> Kimani Njogu, and John Middleton, eds. *Media and Identity in Africa* (Edinburgh, GB: Edinburgh University Press, 2009) 76-77.

<sup>6</sup> Chinua Achebe, *An Image of Africa: Racism in Conrad's 'Heart of Darkness'* (Massachusetts Review. 18. 1977) 19.

<sup>7</sup> Achebe, 26.

sailor John Lok who sailed to west Africa referred to Africans as “beasts without houses”. Adichie also notes how popular images of Africa were of “beautiful landscapes, beautiful animals, and incomprehensible people, fighting senseless wars, dying of poverty and AIDS, unable to speak for themselves and waiting to be saved by a kind, white foreigner.”<sup>8</sup> A representation of Africa that affected her experience as an African in America. Adichie mentions how a roommate pitied her for being African. In a recent Interview with *CNN*, Nigerian television producer and media mogul Mo Abudu who spent some of her childhood in England and Nigeria notes a similar experience. She said, while living in England as a child she was asked questions like “do you guys live under the bridge? do you guys live in proper houses?”<sup>9</sup> and records how 20 years later her children schooling in England are being asked the same questions. Abudu credits this to the lack of diversity in western media representation of Africa.

However, in the article “The Persistence of western Negative Perceptions about Africa: Factoring in the Role of Africans”, scholar Japhace Poncian disagrees with blaming only western media for the negative representation of Africa. He acknowledges that the negative representation of Africa in the west “predates the 19th century colonial conquest.”<sup>10</sup> Citing how German philosopher Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel in the early 19th century wrote in the book the *Lectures on the Philosophy of History*, that “Africa was not a historical continent, that it was capable of neither development nor education and that its people were always like that.”<sup>11</sup> Poncian also notes how other scholars such as Benjamin ben Jonah in the 12th century characterized Africans in a simplistic manner, “as people who eat of the herbs that grow on the

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<sup>8</sup> Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, “The Danger of a Single Story.” *TED.com*. TED Conferences, LLC, July 2009.

<sup>9</sup> *Mo Abodu*. CNN, 27 Mar. 2017. <http://www.cnn.com/videos/world/2017/03/27/african-voices-mo-abudu-nigeria-media-mogul-a.cnn>

<sup>10</sup> Poncian Japhace, "The Persistence of Western Negative Perceptions about Africa: Factoring in the Role of Africans." (*Journal of African Studies and Development* 7.3 2015) 73.

<sup>11</sup> Poncian Japhace, 73.

banks of the Nile, and in the fields. They go about naked and have not the intelligence of ordinary men. They cohabit with their sisters and anyone they can find.... And these are the black slaves, the sons of Ham”<sup>12</sup> Poncian adds that such representation existed in the 17th century as well, whereby Africa was seen as a place of “suffering because the slave trade provoked war, disease, famine and poverty.” Noting also how anti-Abolitionists used this portrayal to justify slavery, by arguing that “Africa was so forbidding as to make slavery in foreign countries a positive escape.”<sup>13</sup> Colonial representation was even more severe, Africa was considered “a land of fantastical beasts and cannibals, slaves, ‘backward races’”<sup>14</sup> Poncian concludes that these representations influences western public and scholarly perception of Africa. But he emphasizes the role Africans play in the negative perceptions and representations of the continent using historical approach to analyze their role. According to Poncian mainstream media has been blamed for this perception while overlooking the part Africans themselves play in this image-making. He states that Africans play an important role in this perception, noting that Africa is the most corrupt region in the world. He notes also the corruption of African leaders, the political instabilities, and the dependency on NGOs. “More than fifty years of independence have also not helped erase negative images about Africa”<sup>15</sup> he states, because “the economic and political malaise inflicting Africa since the late 1970s made matters worse to the extent of reviving the old colonial perceptions that regarded Africans as incapable of independently developing themselves.”<sup>16</sup> He argues that this negative perception has more to do with Africans than western media and given all these issues, it is impossible for the media to develop a positive image of

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<sup>12</sup> Poncian Japhace, 73.

<sup>13</sup> Poncian Japhace, 73.

<sup>14</sup> Poncian Japhace, 73.

<sup>15</sup> Poncian Japhace, 73

<sup>16</sup> Poncian Japhace, 73

Africa. He concludes that Africans kept active these negative portrayals because all the labels used in the West still in fact exist in the African continent.<sup>17</sup> While it is true that Africans do play a role in the media perception of the continent, Poncian does not take into account the inclination of the media to focus only on the negatives, as if there are no positive aspects to the continent. But Poncian's most important point, perhaps, is that Africans have to work to change this perception of their continent in the western world.

Political scientist Branwen Gruffydd Jones on the other hand, sees this issue from a different perspective. She blames the representation of Africa in the west on eurocentrism. In the book, *Decolonizing, International Relations*. Jones points out that the discourses on Africa has been shaped by eurocentrism, which is judging an issue through the European lens. European and American scholars have been the providers of the framework and theories for studying the modern discipline of international relations. The focus has been on powerful states and actors in the global political economy, and has not taken in accounts, the structure of colonialism, imperialism, race, slavery, and dispossession in the non-European world, she argues. It is without doubt that eurocentrism has shaped the media reporting on Africa. The media relies on these experts and scholars for information and understanding of the African continent. But these scholars depend on Eurocentric theories to contextualize the issues in Africa. For this reason, any form of discourse on Africa done in the west will inevitably paint a negative picture of the continent because the context with which the issue is framed is biased.

Former BCC correspondent for Africa George Alagiah notes also this Eurocentric way of viewing Africa in the western world when he writes in a *Guardian* article, "For most people who get their view of the world from television, Africa is a faraway place where good people go

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<sup>17</sup> Poncian Japhace, 79

hungry, bad people run government, and chaos and anarchy are the norm. My job is to give a fuller picture. I have a gnawing regret that, as a foreign correspondent, I have done Africa a disservice, too often showing the continent at its worst and too rarely showing it in full flower.”<sup>18</sup>

This observation was made after Alagiah spent about three years in the continent. He does not deny the fact that the continent is faced with some challenges, but this does not define the continent. There is more to Africa than what is seen in the west, “Above all, it is a place where the outsider is forever welcome. In the hardest of times and in the most desolate of places I have been greeted with a warm hand and an open heart.”<sup>19</sup>

This narrow and pessimistic representation of Africa have provoked a lot of criticism from both African and Western scholars. Baffour Ankomah, Chief Editor of UK based magazine, *New African* denounces western media portrayal of Africa. An article was adapted from his speech at a media conference in the UK. He also referenced George Alagiah, concurring with the idea that the way Africa is framed in the west lacks context. Ankomah narrates how he was surprised at finding that there was somewhere as poor as Albania in the continent of Europe, but what he found more surprising, and disturbing, was the lack of happiness in Albania, “whereas even in the most poverty stricken and politically oppressed corner of Africa, there is irrepressible vein of hope and humour that bubbles to the surface.”<sup>20</sup> He mentions how he learned in another conference with British journalists and editors that the British media report into a box that contains “pre-set ideas”. Therefore, if a correspondent writes a story on Africa that does not fit into the box, it is either edited to fit the box, or discarded.<sup>21</sup> This explains to an extent why most

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<sup>18</sup> George Alagiah. "New Light on the Dark Continent." *The Guardian*. Guardian News and Media, 02 May 1999. <https://www.theguardian.com/media/1999/may/03/1>

<sup>19</sup> George Alagiah.

<sup>20</sup> Baffour Ankomah, "Reporting Africa." *Global Media Journal African Edition* 2.2 (2011) 144.

<sup>21</sup> Baffour Ankomah, "Reporting Africa." 145.

of the news on Africa appears to be narrow in perspective. Ankomah expresses his frustrations at headlines such as *The Guardian* “New Light on the Dark Continent” and *The Economist*, “The Hopeless Continent”. He adds that there has been too much of reporting of Africans as victims, and not enough showing their “daily triumphs against impossible odds”. He calls for a fuller reporting on Africa in western media, noting “historical baggage” and “comfort zone” as contributing factors to the negative portrayal. “Historical baggage” is the idea that the 20th century view of Africa is infected with the prevailing wisdom of the 19th century<sup>22</sup> (as noted in the preceding paragraphs, Wa’Njogu, Adichie and Poncian also traces back the contemporary representation of Africa to previous centuries). While “comfort zone” is the idea that the more negative images of Africa are portrayed in western media, the more the poor masses of the west feel better about their own status because they are “better than these wretched Africans.” So, they take “comfort” from the thought that some people in Africa are far worse off than they are.<sup>23</sup>

This idea of “comfort zone” can also be found in the analysis of political science researcher Andy Baker, in the article “Race, Paternalism, and Foreign Aid: Evidence from U.S. Public Opinion”, Baker explains how white Americans are more likely to send foreign aid to Africans because they perceive a lack of agency and an inability in Africans to actively improve their own lives. In this sense, generosity towards African is accompanied by racial and paternalistic prejudice. She notes that “Western mass media portrayals and popular narratives around black-majority countries reinforce this propensity because they stress helplessness and victimization.”<sup>24</sup> Sociologist Daniele Mezzana corroborates this idea of portraying Africans as victims in his article on the role of NGOs in the representation of Africa. Mezzana states that the

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<sup>22</sup> Baffour Ankomah, "Reporting Africa." 143-146.

<sup>23</sup> Baffour Ankomah, "Reporting Africa." 145.

<sup>24</sup> Andy Baker, "Race, Paternalism, and Foreign Aid: Evidence from U.S. Public Opinion." *American Political Science Review* 109.01 (2015), 93-109.

need for non-governmental organizations to raise funds result in excessive usage of negative images of Africa to “channel the public’s emotion”. He notes that although, there are ethical guidelines that governs the usage of these images, NGOs are “player mediators” who “intentionally or unintentionally, at times can be involved in portraying Africa as incapable of going at it alone and in victimizing the African actors.”<sup>25</sup> This portrayal of Africans as victims, Mezzana notes, “enhance the prestige of those who help the “victims” and make the providers’ action more acknowledged, all of which has a great impact on the fund raising plans.”<sup>26</sup>

Other than the evidence that the portrayal of Africa in the west is generally negative, what can be summarized from this review on the popular representation of Africa in the west is that it dates back to previous centuries, and it is used by the media and NGOs to sell the idea of Africans as “victims” to the western news and philanthropic audience, for the purpose of raising funds and making westerners feel good about themselves.

## **b. Section 2: Africa’s Image in the Continent**

However, the portrayal of Africa in the African continent is noticeable far more sophisticated and has an altogether different agenda and target audience. While it can be said that the popular images of Africa in the west are used to raise money for Africans, it can be argued also that the images of Africa in the African continent are used to get money from Africans; an interesting juxtaposition. In Africa, advertisers work together with the African media (television, newspapers, and magazines) and are responsible for the popular images of Africa in the African continent. Funded by local and multinational corporations for their own money making agenda, advertising has the ability to reach a large number of audience and to convey whatever idea the

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<sup>25</sup> Daniele Mezzana, "Representations A Cancerous Image." *Berkman Klein Center*. N.p., n.d. <https://cyber.harvard.edu/digitaldemocracy/mezzana.htm>

<sup>26</sup> Daniele Mezzana, "Representations A Cancerous Image."

sender intends. Thanks to the advent of technology, advertising has become more far reaching, and it has become much easier for businesses to advertise their brands by putting their messages on multiple platforms. A television advertisement can be easily viewed on a platform like *YouTube* on a mobile device in any parts of the world.

African advertising scholar Emmanuel Alozie have written extensively on the role of advertising in Nigeria and other African countries. Two of his books will be reviewed in this section and referenced in other parts of the paper. In the book, *Cultural Reflections and The Role Of Advertising In The Socio-economic And National Development Of Nigeria*, Alozie analyzes the role of advertising in the formation of social mobilization and modernization in Nigeria. The study examines the “cultural reflections, the nature and characteristics of the messages, and the values and symbols conveyed in Nigerian mass media advertisements”<sup>27</sup>, using content and ideological analyses to analyze over 500 advertisements between 1998 and 1999. The findings of the study were summarized into different points, one of which is that advertising tend to promote foreign products over those made in Nigeria.<sup>28</sup> The perception of Nigerian made products are not very positive as shown by a research conducted by professor Edith Onowe Odia and professor Barnabas Aigbojie Agbonifoh of the University of Benin in Nigeria. The study was carried out using a stratified random sampling to select a sample of 930 respondents and analyzing the data using T-Test, ANOVA and regression statistics. The purpose of the research was to determine the public image of the Nigerian branded exports amongst Nigerians and non-Nigerians. According to the study “Nigerian branded exports was poorly and negatively rated” also more than half of those surveyed “overtly expressed preference for foreign-made products over the

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<sup>27</sup> WebTYs.com. "Cultural Reflections and the Role of Advertising in the Socio-Economic and National Development of Nigeria." *The Edwin Mellen Press*. N.p., n.d.

<sup>28</sup> Emmnauel C Alozie, "Cultural Reflections And The Role Of Advertising In The Socio-economic And National Development Of Nigeria" (Edwin Mellen Pr, 2005) 186.

locally-made products.” The researchers concluded that “The reasons for the observed negative attitudes toward Nigerian products may be related to marketing problems: product quality, pricing, promotion and poor governmental regulations.”<sup>29</sup> But whatever the reason for the negative attitude towards locally made products, this research corroborates Alozie’s findings that advertising tend to promote foreign brands over local brands in Nigeria. Alozie also found that advertising in Nigeria was more product than service related, and that the products were mostly foreign and “non-essential” for the average Nigerian.<sup>30</sup> This could be because the advertising was targeted at the middle-class sector of the country. A 2016 *New York Times* article about “mall culture” in Nigeria explains this. Journalist Norimitsu Onishi states that 4.1 million Nigerian households or 11 percent of the total population are now considered middle class. An additional 7.6 million households would make it into that category by 2030. This projection according to the South African Standard Bank.<sup>31</sup> This demography of Nigerians with purchasing power are some of the target consumers of foreign products, they are the ones who may consider useful the products deemed “non-essential”. These emerging middle class in Nigeria are some of the audiences a more sophisticated image of the African continent is marketed to.

In a second book on advertising, *Capitalist Realism in Africa Realities and Myths in Advertising*, Emmanuel Alozie examines the role of advertising in the national development of Nigeria and other African countries. He evaluates and discusses the political, cultural and religious structures that form the context for advertising in different African countries, and analyzes the use of semiotics in advertising produced in Nigeria to convey cultural values. Over 500 advertising were reviewed. The analyses found that aside from texts, the most common

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<sup>29</sup> Edith Onowe Odia and Barnabas Aigbojie Agbonifoh, "Public image of the Nigerian branded exports." (*Indian Journal of Economics and Business*, vol. 14, no. 1, 2015).

<sup>30</sup> Emmanuel C Alozie, 180.

<sup>31</sup> Norimitsu Onishi, "Nigeria Goes to the Mall." *The New York Times*. The New York Times, 05 Jan. 2016.

symbols found in Nigerian advertisements were photos of human beings and products. He notes that as oil helped the Nigerian economy to grow, the country attracted investment from western multinational companies throughout 1970s and early 1980s, which led to an increase in advertising. American historian Andrew Apter gives an historical account of this oil boom, explaining how it brought Nigeria great wealth, which was mostly spent extravagantly as demonstrated by the Second World Black and African Festival of Art and Culture (FESTAC '77) hosted in Nigeria in 1977. The event which “celebrated the unity and fraternity of black culture and community within the hierarchical framework of an oil rich state”,<sup>32</sup> is purported to have exhausted millions of dollars. It was obvious that Nigerian had a lot of money during this period, and was a gold mine for foreign brands who relied on advertising to promote their products. Alozie notes that these advertising “introduced new habits of consumption and modernization to Nigerian youth and affluent members of society. Nigerians are inundated with commercial print, broadcast, and billboard messages promoting virtues of modernization and the need to use consumer goods and services.”<sup>33</sup> Those messages he states, “have prompted a major cultural shift from traditional to western values.”<sup>34</sup> To prove this point, he gives an example of Nestle campaign in which the corporation “urged young mothers to move from the traditional habit of breastfeeding their infants to using its baby formula products.” Alozie states that the campaign was successful because many young and affluent mothers replaced breastfeeding with Nestle baby formula. He further adds that “the campaign implied that mothers who continue traditional breastfeeding cannot quickly resume a normal life, and that their children do not develop as

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<sup>32</sup> Andrew Apter, *The Pan-African Nation: Oil and the Spectacle of Culture in Nigeria* (University Of Chicago Press; 1 edition, March 1, 2005) 88.

<sup>33</sup> Emmanuel C. Alozie, *Capitalist Realism in Africa: Realities and Myths in Advertising* (Bentham Science Publishers, January 6, 2015) 4.

<sup>34</sup> *Capitalist Realism in Africa: Realities and Myths in Advertising*, 4.

rapidly as infants fed with baby formula.”<sup>35</sup> This example does demonstrate the ability of advertising to influence the audience, an ability undoubtedly capitalized on by both local, western and other foreign brands.

However, in the book, *Media and Identity in Africa*, scholar Karin Barber notes that although the media and the popularization of western culture is blamed for the loss of traditional African culture, “real loss has gone hand in hand with intriguing gain.”<sup>36</sup> Advertising may have resulted in the loss of some African values and the embrace of some western values, but this comes with its advantages too. Barber points out that “the rush to condemn or deny the impact of imported media has stood in the way of an empirically informed understanding of what people have actually done with these media, in different regions and moments in Africa’s history.”<sup>37</sup> Keeping in mind what Africans have done with the media, it can be argued that “imported media open windows onto alternative lives, expanding people’s conceptions of the possible and enhancing the role of the imagination in social life.”<sup>38</sup> All of these components are evident when we examine most African countries today. It can be argued that the influence of western culture which advertising partly contributes to, creates a better Africa because as Barber also notes, “electronic media brought disparate traditions into conjunction with each other, whether in the free-for-all of commercial dissemination or in the orchestrated mosaic promoted by national cultural policy. Performers became aware not only that other ethnic-cultural traditions existed, but also for imitation, borrowing or synthesis.”<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>35</sup> *Capitalist Realism in Africa: Realities and Myths in Advertising*, 5.

<sup>36</sup> Karin Barber, *Media and Identity in Africa*. (Edinburgh: Edinburgh UP, 2011) 3.

<sup>37</sup> *Media and Identity in Africa*, 3.

<sup>38</sup> *Media and Identity in Africa*, 3.

<sup>39</sup> *Media and Identity in Africa*, 7.

### III. The Consumer Market in Africa

Western and other foreign products are generally perceived positively in African countries. A perception largely encouraged by advertising. Advertisers clearly use this positive perception to sell foreign brands. They associate foreign products with better lifestyles. The purpose of advertising, according to advertising critic John Berger is to create envy in the consumer, so he or she desires to buy what is being advertised. In the book, *Ways of Seeing*, he states that advertising “proposes to each of us that we transform ourselves, or our lives, by buying something more.”<sup>40</sup> Arguable, what most middle class Africans aspire towards is to live like other middle class families in more developed countries. Advertisers sells these consumers the possibility of a better lifestyle by trafficking a more appealing image of Africa. For example, a print advertising of Samsung products in *Pride Magazine*,<sup>41</sup> a lifestyle magazine published in Nigeria, features a picture-perfect family; a husband, a wife and their two kids; a boy and a girl. The family is in their modern living room with leather couches, watching what appears to be a Samsung television together. Clearly, this commercial expressing the idea of a very comfortable lifestyle. This advertising can be said to be targeted towards the emerging middle class Nigerians. Stylish images such as these are used by both foreign and local brands to sell their products or services.

The heavy presence of western brands in Nigeria can be said to be reflective of the reality that there is a market for these products in the country. Companies such as KFC Chicken, McDonald’s, Domino’s Pizza, Nike, and Ford, have in recent years stormed Nigeria. But Nigeria is not the only African country attracting foreign brands. This trend is visible in other African

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<sup>40</sup> John Berger, *Ways of Seeing* (Penguin Books, 1990) 131.

<sup>41</sup> "Pride Magazine Nigeria Launch Issue." *Issuu*. N.p., n.d. Web. 11 Apr. 2017. [https://issuu.com/pridemagng/docs/pride\\_mag\\_1](https://issuu.com/pridemagng/docs/pride_mag_1)

countries as well. A report from McKinsey, a global research institute projects that “The single-largest business opportunity in Africa will be its rising consumer market.”<sup>42</sup> The information from the report was gathered from a survey by McKinsey’s Africa Consumer Insights Center. The report published in 2012 provides a detailed overview of African consumers. 13,000 consumers from the largest cities in ten African countries were surveyed, Nigeria, Egypt, South Africa, Ghana, Kenya, Morocco, Sudan, Tunisia, Angola, and Algeria. The report notes that these countries accounted for 81 percent of Africa's private consumption in 2011.<sup>43</sup>

Although poverty and unemployment is still an issue (the areas western media tend to focus on), the McKinsey report notes that “fundamental macrolevel trends are encouraging the emergence of more prosperous consumers, who in turn are contributing to rapid economic growth and employment in Africa.”<sup>44</sup> This explains why Africa’s private consumption rose by \$568 billion from 2002 to 2010.<sup>45</sup> The report focuses on these five areas of consumption in which growth are expected: apparel, financial services, groceries, the Internet, and telecommunications. Apparel, consumer goods and food are projected to account for \$185 billion of the \$410 billion growth expected in the consumer-facing industries. In addition to Africa having the world’s fastest growing population, Africa is also the world’s second largest fastest growing region, next to Asia.<sup>46</sup> This makes the continent a gold mine for consumer-facing companies.

However, the African market holds some set of challenges, especially for foreign brands who must adapt their message to meet the unique demands of African consumers. The report

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<sup>42</sup> "The Rise of the African Consumer." *McKinsey & Company*. N.p., n.d. Web. 12 Apr. 2017. <http://www.mckinsey.com/industries/retail/our-insights/the-rise-of-the-african-consumer>

<sup>43</sup> McKinsey Report, 1.

<sup>44</sup> McKinsey, 1

<sup>45</sup> McKinsey, 1

<sup>46</sup> McKinsey, 1- 2

emphasizes the need for companies to understand the African consumer, noting that Africa has 53 countries, with more than 2000 dialectics and languages. Here are some of the insights gleaned about African consumers from the Mckinsey survey; 84 percent of the respondents believe they will be better off in two years — showing optimism, more than 50 percent have internet access, the latest fashions and a modern shopping experience are important to them, and they are quality and brand conscious. The report notes that these last points contradicts the view that the continent is a backwater where companies can sell second-rate merchandise.<sup>47</sup> The manner in which the people in most modern advertising in the continent dress and presents themselves, completely belays the ideas of Africa being a backwater for second-rate merchandise.

Technology is changing the landscape of Africa. Africa as we know it in the western world is no longer what it used to be. *Reuters* notes that just in 2014, Facebook active users in Africa grew from 100 million in June to 120 million in September, a 20 percent growth increase within just a couple of months. There were 15 million monthly active users in Nigeria as of June 2015. In Kenya, there were 4.5 million monthly active users, and in South Africa, 12 million monthly active Facebook users, most of them accessing the site through mobile devices.<sup>48</sup> The numbers can be expected to have accelerated even further by now. Further evidence of how digitalized Africa is becoming is pointed out by an article in *The Economist* that announces that Kenya leads the world in mobile money. Journalist Tom Standage declares that “paying for a taxi ride using your mobile phone is easier in Nairobi than it is in New York.”<sup>49</sup> This is credited to Safaricom, a mobile-network operator who launched M-Pesa a mobile-based money transfer

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<sup>47</sup> McKinsey, 1

<sup>48</sup> "Facebook Rakes in Users in Nigeria and Kenya, Eyes Rest of Africa." *Reuters*. Thomson Reuters, 10 Sept. 2015. <http://www.reuters.com/article/us-facebook-africa-idUSKCN0RA17L20150910>

<sup>49</sup> "Why Does Kenya Lead the World in Mobile Money?" *The Economist*. The Economist Newspaper, 02 Mar. 2015.

system in Kenya in 2007. M-PESA allows people to transfer money using their mobile phone. Over 17million Kenyans use Safaricom, this is equivalent to more than two-thirds of the adult population. It is the largest mobile-network operator in the country, the article notes.<sup>50</sup> This is one example out of many of how technology is transforming Africa and increasing opportunities and possibilities in the continent.

Africa has become a place where many people cannot live without their mobile phone, as demonstrated by an Airtel advertising. Airtel is an Indian based global telecommunications services company. The company is credited with some of the best advertising campaigns in the continent. This particular advertising is said to be the most memorable campaign so far and has been watched over 500 thousand times on the company's *YouTube* page. The campaign titled "Life without Data"<sup>51</sup> shows a man stranded on an island after a shipwreck. He tries to get the attentions of passing ships but to no avail. He sends a message in a bottle, but the bottle floated back to him. He attached a message to a bird but the bird flew away in the wrong direction. Eventually, the man gave up. By this time, he already looked like a caveman, with his bushy beard and hair. He sees a goat and decided to pursue it for dinner. In the process of chasing the goat, he stumbles into a party full of people dancing and having fun. They were surprised to see him and took out their cell phones to take pictures of him. Happy to be finally back with people, he takes selfies with them and joins the party. The idea here is that he was just a few feet away from where he could get help, but because he had no data connection, there was no way for him to tell. The copy of the ad reads "you're lost with data that works" and "Data is life".

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<sup>50</sup> "Why Does Kenya Lead the World in Mobile Money?" *The Economist*.

<sup>51</sup> Airtel Nigeria. "Life Without Data." *YouTube*. YouTube, 15 Nov. 2016. Web. 16 Apr. 2017. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9QOKJ0FGk90>

There are tons of opportunities in Africa as indicated by a *Forbes* article. *Forbes* journalist Mfonobong Nsehe points out that “Africa is becoming an increasingly attractive hub for foreign investors in light of various economic, political and social reforms that are sweeping through the continent, resulting in a much-improved business environment conducive for foreign direct investment. Apart from that, there is widespread development of critical social and physical infrastructure, and there is an increasing pool of well-educated, English-speaking, enterprising workers in most countries across the continent.”<sup>52</sup> The article mentions, tourism, agriculture, mining of solid minerals, infrastructure and fast moving consumer goods as the top five investment opportunities in 2012. Adding that that “Africa’s fast-emerging middle class is now comprised of over 300 million people” and 60% of the world’s total uncultivated, arable land is in Africa.<sup>53</sup> This leaves plenty of room for economic growth and a lot of opportunities for businesses to tap into.

However, viewing Africa as a single market, the McKinsey report warns, may not result in the outcomes companies are seeking.<sup>54</sup> Therefore, both traditional (television, radio, print) and non-traditional (word of mouth, digital, instore communications) channels are encouraged to build brand awareness.<sup>55</sup> Advertising then becomes very critical to businesses both foreign and local in selling their product or services, getting their message across and building their brand awareness. In order to do these successfully, it is essential that companies create advertisements that appeal to the consumers. Arguably, it is a no brainer that the images of a more sophisticated Africa will appeal to the African consumers. The advertising that these companies create

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<sup>52</sup> Mfonobong Nsehe, "Top 5 Investment Opportunities In Africa For 2012." *Forbes*. Forbes Magazine, 01 Feb. 2012. Web. 12 Apr. 2017.

<sup>53</sup> Forbes Magazine.

<sup>54</sup> McKinsey, 9

<sup>55</sup> McKinsey, 12

accounts for the divergent image of Africa from the one seen in the west. In order to acquire and sell to African consumers, brands market a more dazzling image of contemporary Africa.

Even a successful company such as Safaricom employs this tactic to promote its brand. For example, a television advertising in Kenya, promoting the leading mobile network operator, shows how mobile phone is being used by different Kenyans in all works of life, in diverse places, in various situations and for different reasons. The 2015 advertising titled, “This is For You”, showcases the country in a refined manner. The first scene of the commercial is busy city; we see buses, cars and people heading to their various destinations. Then the commercial fast forwards to a day scene in a marketplace, and then cuts to a young man hurrying to catch a bus. From there, it cuts to a scene where acrobats are performing on the beach, then to a relaxed office environment, then to an art sculptor, then to a boy assembling a toy car, and then to a classroom. The ad continues in the same manner, showing different scenes with people performing different activities. The voice of the narrator says:

This is for the hustlers and the bustlers, for the movers and the shakers and the rule breakers. This is for the imaginers and future careers, for the happy and the sad, the peaceful and the mad. The best friend you ever had. This is for the deal, the date, this is real, this can't wait. This is for the where, the how, the here and now. For here and there and everywhere. This is for night and day, for work and play. For seeking the truth, for finding the way. This is for sharing and caring, living and loving, buying and selling. Discovery. This is for coming together, whatever the weather. This is for hopes and dreams, and tweets and memes, this is for making it, for taking it on. This is for her and him, for us and them. This is for Kenya, for what we can do. This is for you.<sup>56</sup>

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<sup>56</sup> Safaricom Official. “This Is For You.” *YouTube*. YouTube, 19 Aug. 2015. Web. 12 Mar. 2017.

This is a wonderful advertising showcasing the technological advancement of the country. Images such as the ones shown in this particular advertising can be replicated in other advertising promoting a similar or different brand in other African countries. In fact, compared to Verve card television commercial in Nigeria, the ads have the same kind of feel and tone. Verve card is the prepaid card by Verve International founded in Nigeria. The company has expanded into Kenya, Uganda, and Gambia, competing with both Visa and Master cards in these countries. The brand is said to be “one of the tech success stories from Nigeria”.<sup>57</sup> The brand positions itself as Africa’s leading payment card brand, with the tagline “Made by Africans for Africa.”<sup>58</sup> A commercial promoting the prepaid card is noticeably similar to the Safaricom commercial. The television advertisement titled “Whatever the Reason”, shows different Nigerians in different circumstances that may require the use of a credit card. For example, a mother shopping with a grocery cart in a supermarket, a group of women looking at some wax print fabric in a Livingroom, and a group of teenage boys playing video games. It is similar to the Safaricom advertising in the sense that, it shows different people in different situations where a prepaid card may be needed. The setting of both commercials, the people and the activities are almost picture perfect. These ads feature urban sceneries, latest fashion, well-furnished houses, even the rural areas are presented in a clean and attractive way. These images and the messages they convey is designed to appeal to their target audiences, the urban African consumer with spending power.

A 2016 report by *African Development Bank Group* notes that Africa has the world’s youngest population. The report predicts that by 2050, the continent will be home to 38 of the 40

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<sup>57</sup> “Nigeria Founded Card Brand Verve International Expands to Kenya – Ventureburn.” *Ventureburn*. 30 Oct. 2015. Web. 11 Mar. 2017.

<sup>58</sup> “My Verve World.” *Google+*. Google, n.d. Web. 12 Apr. 2017. <https://plus.google.com/+Verveinternational>

youngest countries and the median population will be under the age of 25.<sup>59</sup> These young Africans in addition to the growing middle class, are the target audience of brands in Africa. Many modern advertising in the continent feature this demography of people. A perfect example is a 2016 Vodafone commercial in Cameroon titled “The World is Yours”.<sup>60</sup> Vodafone is a British multinational telecommunications company. This commercial shows different Cameroonian youth sporting the latest fashion going about their daily activities, in the library, at the playground, in the market place, in the office, at work, at the beach, at a party, and in the streets. There are no words used in this commercial, just the images and the music in the background, but the target audience of the commercial is clear.

#### **IV. Celebrity Endorsement**

One distinct advertising approach used in Nigeria further illustrates this concept of businesses using a classier image of Africa to advertise their brands, which is the usage of celebrity endorsement to promote a company's brand. Just as companies in the western world use celebrity endorsement to advertise their products, so do companies in Africa. Although, it is more expensive to use a celebrity to market a product or service than it is to use regularly people, it is a very effective method of advertising, which is why most known brands still deploy this marketing technique in reaching their target audiences. Despite protests from some advertising critics about how this technique is used to exploit consumers, an audience is still more likely to buy a product endorsed by his or her favorite celebrity. Criticism of celebrity endorsement have not stopped brands from using celebrities to endorse their products nor consumers from buying

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<sup>59</sup> "Unsafe Jobs for Youths." *The Science News-Letter* 43.20 (1943): 308. *African Development Bank*. Web. [https://www.afdb.org/fileadmin/uploads/afdb/Documents/Boards-Documents/Bank\\_Group\\_Strategy\\_for\\_Jobs\\_for\\_Youth\\_in\\_Africa\\_2016-2025\\_Rev\\_2.pdf](https://www.afdb.org/fileadmin/uploads/afdb/Documents/Boards-Documents/Bank_Group_Strategy_for_Jobs_for_Youth_in_Africa_2016-2025_Rev_2.pdf)

<sup>60</sup> "The World Is Yours - Vodafone Cameroon." *YouTube*. YouTube, 03 Oct. 2016. Web. 16 Apr. 2017. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ECsqZQUx8ao>

the products. In Nigeria, celebrity endorsement is even more rampant; celebrities are used to advertise everything from products such as toothpaste, sodas, and snacks, to luxury goods such as cars, designer wristwatches, and expensive wines. Just like there is an “American dream”, there is a dream of an ideal lifestyle in Nigeria. For most Nigerian youth, celebrities represent that dream because they have risen against the odds to become successful. There is a strong celebrity culture in Nigeria that makes it easier for celebrity endorsement to succeed. Images of actors, musicians, and television personalities advertising one product or the other fill up the pages of Nigerian magazines and they are generally seen in television advertising as well. They are used as brand ambassadors for product lines. Nigerian celebrities are seen as role models, especially to the African youths who try to emulate their lifestyles by copying their fashion and using whatever brands the celebrities’ uses. This is why celebrity endorsement is such an effective technique in promoting a company's brand in the country. They are the embodiment of the “Nigerian dream”. By associating its brand with a celebrity, a company is sending a message to the consumers that they can be like the celebrity by using the company's product.

However, these celebrities, unlike most of their fans, can afford the fancy lifestyles they are often advertising. But as mentioned earlier, the purpose of advertising, as critic John Berger notes is to create envy in the consumer, so he or she desires to buy what is being advertised, even though the lifestyle portrayed in the advertising may be an aspiration rather than a current reality. He explains how this works, advertising shows the consumers “people who have apparently been transformed and are, as a result, enviable.”<sup>61</sup> In this case, the celebrities are the people who are shown to have been transformed. The desire to be like these celebrities encourages the audience to buy the product. Although the transformation of the celebrity did not necessarily come from

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<sup>61</sup> John Berger, *Ways of Seeing*, 131.

the product being advertised. Berger states that “the state of being envied is what constitutes glamour”<sup>62</sup>, and advertising is “the process of manufacturing glamour”.<sup>63</sup> Who best to manufacture glamour other than celebrities who, in fact, live glamorous and enviable lifestyles? The “Glo Unlimited”<sup>64</sup> television commercial is a great example of how celebrity endorsement is used in Nigeria. The advertising features a number of celebrated Nigerian musicians turning services that Glo network offers into lyrics for unique musical styles. The advertising is filmed like a music video. This strategy is meant to resonate with the many fans of these celebrities. The scenes that makes up some of Africa’s music videos and movies are indicators of the wealth of these stars. Some of the music videos and movies produced in Africa will surprise most western audiences because they showcase deluxe model cars, luxurious houses, and various designer brands. These videos tell an altogether different story of Africa. Not the story of Africa with poverty, but one with prosperity. These are the images Nigerian consumers and other African consumers are constantly inundated with in television, African movies and music videos, and in African magazines and newspapers.

Another great example of how celebrity endorsement is utilized in Nigeria, is the Guinness #MadeofBlack print advertising campaign. With the purpose of launching the Guinness Black product line, promoting Guinness as a drink most popular amongst Africans and promoting black culture, the brand utilizes Nigerian pop artists to deliver different messages to the audiences. Messages such as “Black got swag”, “Black dances to a different beat” and “Black is not a color, black is an attitude”. The campaign, “shines a light on a movement being

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<sup>62</sup> John Berger, *Ways of Seeing*, 131.

<sup>63</sup> John Berger, *Ways of Seeing*, 131.

<sup>64</sup> Glofactor. “GLO UNLIMITED COMMERCIAL.” *YouTube*. YouTube, 08 June 2013. Web. 11 Mar. 2017.

created by a new generation of Africans whose boldness cannot be contained and who are fueling a new, progressive spirit of Africa.”<sup>65</sup> The posture and manner in which the artists are dressed and adorned speak volumes; they represent swagger, confidence, self-actualization, a sense of identity and pride. They are sending messages about Africanness as something to be embraced and proud of, a message that will undoubtedly resonate with many young Africans.

In addition to celebrities being used to sell products, they are used also to promote good causes. Celebrities serve as ambassadors for different causes throughout the African continent. An excellent example of this is the 2014 television advertising music video featuring 19 recording artists from 11 African countries, speaking 10 different languages.<sup>66</sup> These celebrities urges African leaders to turn to agriculture to fight poverty in the continent. The advertising titled “Cocoa na Chocolate” is organized by ONE, a “campaigning and advocacy organization of more than seven million people around the world taking action to end extreme poverty and preventable disease, particularly in Africa.”<sup>67</sup> This commercial demonstrates how people from different African countries are working together to solve the issue of poverty across the continent. It is sending the message of a unified Africa. This commercial also demonstrates how celebrities are utilized in advertising in the continent. As mentioned, people are more likely to pay attention when their favorite celebrities are involved. African celebrities because of their wealth and status command attention. There is also the added aspect that they made it against difficult odds that makes them even more admirable to their fans. Employing celebrities to promote a product or a cause will undoubtedly result in the outcomes the advertisers are seeking.

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<sup>65</sup> “Guinness Africa: Made of Black.” *Adevee*. Web. 11 Mar. 2017.

<sup>66</sup> TheONECampaign. “Cocoa Na Chocolate (Official Music Video).” *YouTube*. YouTube, 03 Apr. 2014. Web. 12 Mar. 2017.

<sup>67</sup> “About ONE.” *ONE*. 06 Mar. 2017. Web. 12 Mar. 2017.

The level of importance brands in Africa place on advertising is revealed by the amount of capital that goes into the advertising industries. In Nigeria alone the advertising spending between 2001 and 2010 quintupled to \$646 million, this information according to MediaReach OMD, as referenced by an article in *The Economist*,<sup>68</sup> this “reflects the emergence of a middle class with cash to spare for branded goods.”<sup>69</sup> In 2015 alone, advertising spending was 97.9 billion naira (equivalent of \$319million), according to the same source. MediaReach OMD is West and Central Africa biggest media agency.<sup>70</sup> They produce a yearly report on media trends in the continent. Television gets the highest share of the advertising expenditure with 39 billion naira, (\$123million). While the telecommunications sector is reported to be the highest advertising spender with 16.7 billion naira (\$52000000).<sup>71</sup>

## V. The Telecommunications Industry

It is not surprising to find that the telecommunications sector spends a lot of money on advertising, it is a highly competitive sector. BMI Research, a research firm headquartered in London estimates that mobile subscribers in Nigeria will reach 181.99 million by 2021. The firm published a 2016 telecommunications report on Nigeria. The report states that there are an estimated 47.5 million 3G/4G phones by the end of 2017. A figure that is expected to rise in a “stable fashion”, exceeding 129.14 million by 2021, “this suggests high advanced mobile data uptake over the next five years.” MTN, Globacom, Airtel and Etisalat and Visafone are

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<sup>68</sup> “Nigeria’s Mad Men.” *The Economist*. The Economist Newspaper, 30 Apr. 2011. Web. 11 Mar. 2017.

<sup>69</sup> “Nigeria’s Mad Men.” *The Economist*. The Economist Newspaper, 30 Apr. 2011. Web. 11 Mar. 2017.

<sup>70</sup> “Global Media Agency Of The Year 11 Times in a Row.” *MediaReach OMD*. N.p., n.d. Web. 14 Apr. 2017. <http://www.mediareachomd.com/>

<sup>71</sup> “Telecoms Top Nigeria's Ad Spend with N16.7Bn in 2015 - Mediafacts.” *Nigeria Communications Week*. N.p., 11 July 2016. Web. 14 Apr. 2017. <http://nigeriacommunicationsweek.com.ng/news/telecoms-top-nigeria-s-ad-spend-with-n167bn-in-2015-mediafacts>.

identified as the major competitors in this sector.<sup>72</sup> Advertisements in the telecommunications industries in Nigeria and other African countries are noticeably very creative and upscale. Some of these telecommunications firms takes the business of promoting their brands even a step further by sponsoring television talent shows.

The *MTN Project Fame West Africa* launched in 2008 is a great example of how companies promote their brands. The talent show is organized by MTN (Mobile Telephone Network) the multinational mobile telecommunications firm headquartered in South Africa. The show welcomes musically gifted youths from different West African countries to compete for a record deal. The first ever winner of the talent show, *Iyanya* is now one of Africa's hottest recording artist known internationally, with numerous hit songs and awards under his belt. *Iyanya* continues to be a brand ambassador for MTN. Another great example is the *Glo X Factor* talent show sponsored by Globacom Limited, another multinational telecommunications firm based in Nigeria. However, much importance is still placed in traditional advertising through television. Arguably, telecommunications firm create some of the best television advertising in the continent. A couple have been mentioned in this paper so far, the Safaricom commercial from Kenya, the GLO Unlimited campaign from Nigeria, and the Airtel advertising.

There are so many great advertising to choose from that demonstrates how telecommunications firms advertise. But a Kenyan television campaign created by advertising agency Ogilvy & Mather Africa for Airtel is particularly attention catching. Ogilvy is the largest network agency in Africa,<sup>73</sup> responsible for some of the most creative advertising campaign in the continent. The Airtel campaign in question won a 2016 Association of Practitioners in

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<sup>72</sup> "Nigeria Telecommunications Report." *English*. N.p., n.d. Web. 14 Apr. 2017. <http://store.bmiresearch.com/nigeria-telecommunications-report.html>

<sup>73</sup> "Who We Are." *Ogilvy & Mather Africa*. N.p., n.d. Web. 15 Apr. 2017. [http://www.ogilvyafrika.com/who\\_we\\_are](http://www.ogilvyafrika.com/who_we_are).

Advertising (APA) Award. The commercial titled “Switch on Rain Man” shows a group of young people going for an outdoor barbeque. They were stopped by an old man who looks like a shaman. He informs them that it was not a good day for a barbeque. They asked him why, he consults a box and tells them it was going to rain, as he chants “accuweather accuweather”. The group of young people laughs skeptically, ignores the old man and continues on their way, but the rain started almost immediately and the old man’s assistant brought out an umbrella, while the young people scramble to find shelter. There was actually a phone in the box which showed the old man the weather forecast, so “Accuweather” is the deity he consulted. The voiceover of the advertising says “To take advantage of the vast world of online information, switch over to Airtel internet.”<sup>74</sup> It is a compelling ad with great humor. It shows how with the internet; even seemingly unknowing people can have access to important information. This commercial can be accessed on Ogilvy's website.

Advertising promoting telecommunications companies are also indicative of the changing landscape of Africa, encouraged by globalization and technology. As demonstrated by the Airtel, advertising, people in Africa now have access to global information, thanks to the internet. The McKinsey report mentioned earlier notes that 22 percent of urban Africans spend more than ten hours online weekly, doing the same thing as their counterparts everywhere, “they use social-networking sites, send e-mail, watch video and listen to music, keep up with news, and search for information.”<sup>75</sup> Shows like Grey’s Anatomy, an American drama series is watched in Nigeria, Kenya, Ghana, and South Africa and is even translated in French for some of these African audiences. African youths listen to western music, and most African hip hop artists imitates their American counterparts in fashion, lyrics and style. Latest fashion trends can be seen on the

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<sup>74</sup> *Ogilvy & Mather Africa*. N.p., n.d. Web. 15 Apr. 2017. [http://www.ogilvyafrika.com/our\\_work](http://www.ogilvyafrika.com/our_work)

<sup>75</sup> McKinsey Report, 7

streets in urban areas in many African countries. Deluxe model cars, modern shopping experiences, upscale houses are enjoyed by many Africans today. These advertising reflects all these changes taking place on the continent and mostly focuses on the good aspects in order to sell products or services.

## **VI. Advertising Challenges in Africa**

However, it is not enough for advertising to just market contemporary Africa in an appealing manner. Advertising must reflect the society's values, lifestyles, beliefs and culture in order to be successful. The noted complexities in Africa that comes with the fact that it is a big continent with 53 countries and about 2000 dialectics,<sup>76</sup> calls for advertisers and brands to be very strategic in reaching their unique target audience. As mentioned in the McKinsey report earlier, Africa should not be treated as a single market. There are many cultural, political social and economic differences that exist amongst the African states and also internally within the different African states. The McKinsey report notes some differences between Sub-Saharan Africans and Northern Africans, for example Sub-Saharan Africa express optimism for a better future while their northern counterparts were less optimistic.<sup>77</sup> Advertising to these two separate demography may require entirely different approaches.

In Nigeria for instance. There is a divide between the norther part of the country and the rest of the country, caused by religious differences. The norther part of the country is highly populated by Muslims. Advertising targeted at the northern part of Nigeria are especially created to reflect the cultural and religious values of that part of the country. A more secular approach will not only be unsuccessful but also considered offensive. Advertising targeted at this

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<sup>76</sup> McKinsey Report, 1

<sup>77</sup> McKinsey Report, 4

audiences must reflect Islamic values, especially in the manner in which the women dress and conduct themselves. Two commercials perfectly reflect this idea, the Indomie noodle “Mama do good” campaign and the Maggi Star commercial. Different versions of these commercials were created to demonstrate the ethnic difference that exist in the country. Major differences can be seen between the advertisement targeted at the northern part of the country versus the one targeted at the larger audience.

The Indomie noodle “Mama Do Good” campaign was created in 2010 and was targeted at mothers in Nigeria. There are four versions of this campaign indicating the three main ethnic groups in Nigeria, the Yorubas, the Igbos and the Hausas (the norther part of the country). One of the advertising is in English, one in pidgin, one in Yoruba and the other in Hausa language. Each commercial feature children and a mother or grandmother cooking Indomie for the children. In two of the campaign a visiting grandmother narrates to her grandchildren the story of their mother while she was a child and how their mother always begs for Indomie noodle. The setting of each commercial is a modern living room, a well-furnished apartment. Again, we get the idea of a picture-perfect family in their home, sharing a meal (this is in keeping with the marketing strategy of presenting a more appealing image of Africa). The voice over of one of the advertising says “There is no noodles like Indomie noodles, that’s why generation of caring mothers trust only Indomie.”<sup>78</sup> But what really strikes an audience is the differences between these commercials promoting the same product. All women were dressed in traditional African attires in all of these ads and had on head wraps, but the Hausa version is noticeably more conservative. The woman had a hijab while she was outdoor. While the children in the other ads were dressed in English attires, the children in the Hausa version were dressed in traditional

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<sup>78</sup> Manpreetsi. "Indomie Instant Noodles English Advertisement." *YouTube*. YouTube, 06 July 2012. Web. 15 Apr. 2017. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=k9uQG-uwJks>

attires, and the little girls all had their head covered.<sup>79</sup> Indomie noodle itself is an Indonesian brand produced in Nigeria since 1995 and has grown to become a household name. The brand accounts for about 74% market share in Nigeria, with an estimated annual growth of 40%.<sup>80</sup> Having been marketing to the Nigerian audience for such a long period of time, a brand such as this is aware of the right approaches to use in advertising in order to be successful.

Similar to the Indomie noodle ad campaign, the Maggi Star commercial also has different versions, one targeted at the northern part of the country in which the Hausa language is spoken and the other targeted to the southern part of the country in which English is spoken. Nestle is an international cooperation, the Maggi seasoning cube is only one out of the company's many brands sold in Nigeria, including cereal, milk, powdered chocolate and the baby formula. The Maggi Star television advertisement titled "The Secret Ingredient in Every Home", shows a traditional Nigerian wedding scene. Everyone is dressed in their traditional attire, the bride, the groom, the parents, friends and well wishes. There is singing and dancing, with drummers and MCs all making merriments. When it was time for the bride's mother to pray for the bride, she kneels in front of her mother, and we could see tears streaming down the mother's eyes. The mother puts a cube of Maggi Star seasoning in the bride's hand and says to her "You are a star; may you be the secret ingredient that makes a happy home."<sup>81</sup> The ceremony ended and another scene was shown in which the now married bride is in her kitchen cooking a traditional Nigerian meal with Maggi Star. She presents the meal to her husband and after taking a bite, the look on his face shows that he is well satisfied with the cooking. Maggi is very well known in Nigeria

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<sup>79</sup> Indomie noodles. "Indomie Instant Noodles TV Ad : Hausa - Mama Yara." *YouTube*. YouTube, 06 Oct. 2010. Web. 15 Apr. 2017. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BOZZrluxEZE>

<sup>80</sup> "About Us." *About Us - Indomie*. N.p., n.d. Web. 15 Apr. 2017. <http://www.indomie.ng/about-us.html>

<sup>81</sup> MAGGI Nigeria. "The Secret Ingredient in Every Home!" *YouTube*. YouTube, 16 June 2015. Web. 15 Apr. 2017. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hMBQyr1xxU>

because cooking is also one of the traditional values in the country. It is advised that women learn how to cook to prevent their husbands from cheating on them, because lack of delicious meals can cause a man to cheat on his wife with a woman who cooks better. There is a common saying that “it is the woman who knows how to cook who owns the husband.” So, what these commercials do is uphold that same traditional value. The northern version of the commercial is also more conservative, the bride’s head is covered throughout the commercial.<sup>82</sup> Whereas there was a peck between the couple in the southern version, it was absent in the northern version, such display of affection would be deemed inappropriate in the north.

Some of the issues taking place with the religious extremist group Boko Haram in the Eastern Northern part of Nigeria have been credited to a rejection of western culture. They believe it is too materialistic and godless. While brands like Indomie and Maggi Star have mastered the act of advertising to the Nigerian audience, some brands miss the mark and suffer consequences as a result. An article in *The Economist* (unknown writer) headlined “Nigeria's mad men” demonstrates this. The article cites an example of an unsuccessful advertising and narrates another story that illustrates the need for brands to be extremely careful in their marketing approach. The article tackles the question of what advertising says about doing business in Nigeria. This is one of the answers, “Nigeria’s ideals vary from place to place”, and therefore “Nigerian advertisers must be both deft and sensitive.”<sup>83</sup> This is due to the religious, age, and socioeconomic differences in the country. Also, advertising reveals which businesses are thriving and those that are not. The article notes that mobile phones, banks, beer and food industries are considered the “sexy sector”. It states “Mobiles have hit Nigeria like a rainstorm in

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<sup>82</sup> Jumia Nigeria. "Nestle Maggi Seasoning (North) | Jumia Nigeria." *YouTube*. YouTube, 15 June 2016. Web. 15 Apr. 2017. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=diN35y0Kys4>

<sup>83</sup> “Nigeria’s Mad Men.” *The Economist*. The Economist Newspaper, 30 Apr. 2011. Web. 11 Mar. 2017.

the desert. The number of connections has shot up from almost none in 2000 to 75m in 2009. Competition is bloody.”<sup>84</sup> As mentioned, the competition in the telemarketing sector reinforces the need for advertising.

*The Economist* article notes also that some advertising would be dangerous to run in the north. For instance, a commercial in which there are voluptuous women. Such a commercial would thrive in the south, but in the north, it is considered offensive. The article gives an example of a lightheaded newspaper column that speculated that the Prophet Muhammad might have enjoyed the Miss World contest. The unintended consequence of this is that riots ensued leading to the death of 200 people. The office of *ThisDay*, the newspaper publisher was burnt and the unfortunate writer had to flee out of the country when he was threatened with death. This incident amplifies the extreme importance of advertising to match the values of the community being targeted, and also amplifies the differences that exist within Nigeria. The article notes that since the incident which took place in 2002, advertisers have been more careful not to offend, “If you put up a billboard in Kano [a northern city] and discover that it is minutely, minutely offensive to any cleric, you tear it down immediately.”<sup>85</sup> The article relates another anecdote of an advertising gone bad, “Gold Circle, a brand of condoms, ran an ad in 2009 in which a male motorist is stopped by the police. He is found to be carrying a packet of condoms. A policewoman returns them, having written her telephone number on the packet.”<sup>86</sup> According to the article, the police did not find this advertising funny at all and it had to be withdrawn. These examples just further emphasize the need to create advertising that mirrors societal values.

Some advertising however will be condemned in any part of the country. For instance,

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<sup>84</sup> “Nigeria’s Mad Men.” *The Economist*.

<sup>85</sup> “Nigeria’s Mad Men.” *The Economist*.

<sup>86</sup> “Nigeria’s Mad Men.” *The Economist*.

the print advertising promoting the skin bleaching product Whitenicious with an image of Nigerian-Cameroon singer clad in a bikini has been largely criticized for promoting the colonial idea that whiteness is the standard for beauty. The advertising shows the formerly brown skinned singer transformed to the point that she is unrecognizable, her skin has become so very light, she could pass for a white person.<sup>87</sup> An advertising such as this is unsuccessful because we live in a time where black culture is being embraced all over the world and where messages of black and natural beauty is in fashion. For example, many women of African descent are beginning to reject chemicalized products in favor of natural products to style their hair. There is a trend of embracing one's natural hair that has been taking place for a while now in popular culture. An advertising such as Whitenicious will be considered even more improper in the northern part of Nigeria. The appearance of the model and the product she is promoting would be seen as offensive.

In 2016, Ghana's Food and Drug Authority began a ban on the multibillion-dollar skin bleaching industry. According to a *New York Times* article by correspondent Helene Cooper, there are about 70 percent of women using skin bleaching products in some places in West Africa. Officials are concerned that this could lead to skin cancer because the ingredient (hydroquinone) in the products "attack the skin's natural protective melanin."<sup>88</sup> There is also concern that this industry is sending mixed messages to women. On one hand, they are told it is wrong to bleach their skin. On the other hand, "they are flooded with messages — and not even subliminal ones — that tell them that white is beautiful." Cooper expresses that it will be difficult for the government to enforce this ban without addressing advertising that keeps

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<sup>87</sup> Mbenwohasaba. "Dencia Covers New Ad for Whitenicious." *Cameroon360*. 29 Dec. 2014. Web. 17 Apr. 2017.

<sup>88</sup> Helene Cooper, "Where Beauty Means Bleached Skin." *The New York Times*. The New York Times, 26 Nov. 2016. Web. 17 Apr. 2017.

promoting skin bleaching products. She states, “In fact, if you go by the billboards in Accra, you would be hard-pressed to believe that Ghana has any dark-skinned people.” And cites Ghanaian Actress, Ama Abebrese who said she is heartbroken because, “There’s not a day I don’t drive into town and see a billboard that tells me I need perfect white skin. We are here in an African country, and it’s like someone just hit you in your gut.”<sup>89</sup>

To speak out against skin bleaching products like Whitenicious, Ghanaian actress Ama Abebrese launches an anti-bleaching campaign with the message, “Love Your Natural Skin tone. Say No to Skin bleaching and Skin Toning.” The advertising for this campaign is a billboard image of four Ghanaian women, an actress, a model, a musician, and Ama Abebrese. These women have different natural skin tones. In an accompanying video the women voiced out their disapproval of skin whitening products and encourage women to love their natural skin. Skin bleaching products is said to be prevalent in Ghana. According to the article covering the campaign, the aim of the campaign is not to judge but rather to “encourage Ghanaians to love their natural skin tone they were born with, and resist the practice of skin bleaching. To highlight the risks and dangers of using different chemicals, lotions pills etc that are associated with decreasing the melanin in the skin by bleaching.”<sup>90</sup> A campaign such as this reveals this particular aspect of the society.

In the case of Nigeria, the values are a combination of western and traditional Nigerian values, and most ads reflects this. *The Economist* article<sup>91</sup> about advertising in the country also mentions that younger consumers tend to be knowledgeable about foreign brands, but at the

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<sup>89</sup> Helene Cooper, "Where Beauty Means Bleached Skin."

<sup>90</sup> "The Ama.K Abrebrese Foundation... Say No To Skin Bleaching & Skin Toning Campaign." *Me Firi Ghana*. Web. 17 Apr. 2017. <http://mefirighana.com/the-ama-k-abrebrese-foundation-say-no-to-skin-bleaching-skin-toning-campaign/>

<sup>91</sup> "Nigeria’s Mad Men." *The Economist*.

same time are intensely proud of their own culture. For instance, they abbreviate Nigeria to “Naija” or “9ja”, this is said to imply a love for the “the food, the flamboyant dressing, the mannerisms, the boisterous—some say loud—interaction among complete strangers.”<sup>92</sup> Savvy advertisers try to find a way to fit in. For example, Etisalat, a telecommunications firm from the United Arab Emirates whose Nigerian numbers begin with “0809”, has branded itself “0809ja”. Recognizing the need for a balance foreign brands find various ways to assimilate. Another example, “Virgin Nigeria, the local affiliate of a British airline, has changed its name to Air Nigeria, and insists in its publicity that it is “Passionately African”.<sup>93</sup>

*The Economist* article mentions also that “Beer ads tend to be macho”, this can be said to be in keeping with the patriarchal values of the society. Television advertising of beer brands usually feature macho looking men performing some kind of activity, or being successful at a venture, or being in charge. The article states that Guinness beer brand while it does not propagate the widely-believed myth that its extra-strong African stout makes one a stallion in bed, “it does not go out of its way to scotch it, either.”<sup>94</sup> Gulder, another well-known beer brand in Nigeria, also promotes the idea that men ought to be strong, in charge and macho. In 2004 Gulder launched a reality television show called the *Gulder Ultimate Search*.<sup>95</sup> In the TV series, contestants compete for a cash prize. *The Search* includes looking for a hidden treasure in the wild, and requires that the contestants be physically fit, since they will be left to fend for themselves in the forest for as long as the series lasted. It is about the survival of the fittest,

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<sup>92</sup> “Nigeria’s Mad Men.” *The Economist*.

<sup>93</sup> “Nigeria’s Mad Men.” *The Economist*.

<sup>94</sup> “Nigeria’s Mad Men.” *The Economist*.

<sup>95</sup> “Gulder Ultimate Search Season 11 - The Mission.” *Gulder Ultimate Search*. N.p., n.d. Web. 15 Apr. 2017. <http://gulderultimatesearch.tv/GUS%2011/index.html#>

which in this case are strong, muscular men. Women are permitted to participate in the competition to allow for equality of the sexes, but at the end, a male always wins.

Shows like the *Gulder Ultimate Search*, *MTN Project Fame*, and *GLO X Factor* that comes with cash prizes and, or a car is a tradition in Nigeria's media. Corporations' use them to promote their brands, but at the same time to give back to the society by helping Nigerian youths. The winner, in addition to the cash prize, becomes an instant celebrity and this in turns changes his or her socioeconomic status. As mentioned earlier, unemployment is an issue in Africa. Therefore, shows such as these sponsored by brands, reflect the need to help young people in the country.

## **VII. The Reflective Hypothesis**

The debate on the role of advertising as a reflection of society or as a distorting force is a long standing one. Some scholars believe advertising mirrors the society, while critics believe it distorts societal values. Advertising expert Emmanuel Alozie briefly summarizes these opposing arguments in the book *Capitalist Realism in Africa: Realities and Myths in Advertising* reviewed earlier. He states that advertising “serves as a medium for conveying rhetorical, symbolic, and metaphoric contents” and that “Advertising text depends on visual imagery, colors, movements, music, and other non-verbal elements to convey cultural values.” But some critics believe that “advertising develop stereotypical promotional messages that corrupt the mind, promote consumerism, and destroy the moral and cultural values of peripheral societies”. These critics view advertising as being “manipulative, deceptive, coercive, tasteless, offensive, driven, and wasteful.”<sup>96</sup> On the other hand, those who support advertising argue that advertising goes hand in

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<sup>96</sup> Emmanuel C Alozie, “*Capitalist Realism*” in *Africa Realities and Myths in Advertising*. (Sharjah: Bentham Science, 2015) 3.

hand with economic development, since advertising help cooperation promote their goods and services, without which “their factories are likely to be closed, raising the rate of unemployment in societies where employment is vitally needed to raise standards of living.”<sup>97</sup> So, while some believe advertising distorts societal values, some believe it merely mirrors the society. This idea is known as the “Reflective Hypothesis”.

However, the reflection that advertising shows us may not always be a pleasant one, therefore some critics may want to “smash” the mirror, as advertising scholar Morris Holbrook puts it. In the journal article, “Mirror, Mirror, on the Wall, What’s Unfair in the Reflections on Advertising?” Holbrook criticized the Conventional Wisdom or Prevailing Opinion (CWOP) stated by advertising critic Richard Pollay in the journal article, “The Distorted Mirror: Reflections on the Unintended Consequences of Advertising.” CWOP is the idea that advertising has socially destructive force, that it “trivializes reality, distorts societal values, engenders dangerous or debilitating emotions, and thereby produce unintended consequences that are due cause for alarm.”<sup>98</sup> Holbrook disagrees with these notions and argues that CWOP has a weak logical thread. He disputes the idea that advertising acts to oversimplify reality, distort social values, and evoke unhealthy emotions. He concludes that CWOP’s attacks on advertising are unnecessarily destructive. Mirror imagery, Holbrook states is a common literary device, it was used by classical and neoclassical critics. He references literary critic M. H. Abrams, who states that “written communications should hold a mirror up to nature—that is, they should accurately reflect or represent the world around them”<sup>99</sup> Holbrook points out that Pollay himself acknowledges that many people “feel that advertising can, does, and in fact must

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<sup>97</sup> Emmanuel C Alozie. “*Capitalist Realism*” in *Africa Realities and Myths in Advertising*, 4.

<sup>98</sup> Holbrook, Morris B. “Mirror, Mirror, on the Wall, What’s Unfair in the Reflections on Advertising?” (*Journal of Marketing* 51.3 1987) 95-96.

<sup>99</sup> Morris B Holbrook, 95.

perform that function in modern free societies and that, indeed, it would fail if it did not accurately reflect prevailing cultural values and norms.”<sup>100</sup> Therefore, it can be said that critics of advertising do not like the kind of image that is being reflected back to them, which is why they condemn advertising.

In his book, *The Mirror Makers*, author Stephen Fox gives a general overview of the history of advertising. He quotes words from the makers and creators of advertising in America who argue that advertising must be fitted to the audience. They reject the idea that advertising manipulates the society. According to Carl Ally, one of the early creators of advertising, it is the other way around; “Society manipulates advertising”,<sup>101</sup> because advertising responds to social trends. David Ogilvy who is considered the father of advertising believes that advertising follows mores but never leads them.<sup>102</sup> Fox admits that the mirror of advertising too often show us our “least lovely qualities of materialism, sexual insecurity, jealousy, vanity, and greed,”<sup>103</sup> but all the same, it is a reflection.

This sentiment that advertising should reflect the society, is echoed by Feyi Olubodun, CEO of Insight Publicis, an advertising agency in Nigeria. In an interview with *ThisDay*, A Nigerian newspaper, Olubodun states that “Nigeria advertising should reflect local tradition and culture to excel.”<sup>104</sup> He believes advertisers should be cognizant of the cultural nuances of the environment in which they are advertising. He adds that although advertising agencies in Nigeria are learning from the west, there are some behaviors that are acceptable in the west but unacceptable in Nigeria. As a result, advertising in Nigeria should reflect local tradition and

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<sup>100</sup> Morris B Holbrook, 95.

<sup>101</sup> Fox, Stephen R. *The Mirror Makers: A History of American Advertising and Its Creators*. (Urbana: U of Illinois, 1997) 329.

<sup>102</sup> Fox, Stephen R. *The Mirror Makers*, 329.

<sup>103</sup> Fox, Stephen R. *The Mirror Makers*, 329.

<sup>104</sup> “Nigeria: Olubodun - Nigeria Advertising Should Reflect Local Tradition and Culture to Excel.” *AllAfrica.com*. 31 Mar. 2015. Web. 11 Mar. 2017.

culture. He notes that the advertising business is a tough one. Advertising clearly is a booming business in Africa with a lot of areas of opportunities, even as digital ads are becoming in vogue. Most brands utilize television to advertise their brand because television has a wider reach. Not many people buy magazines because they are expensive. Radio and newspaper advertising are also considered effective in reaching a wider audience, people tend to share newspapers and listen to radios. But with the emergence of digital technology, advertisers are beginning to turn to other platforms such as social media to get their messages across. But this also presents new set of challenges for advertisers.

Alan Edgar, Regional Creative Director of the advertising agency Ogilvy Africa considers Nigeria to be the most innovative and creative African country in brand communications, “they have the financial clout to create the most innovative, hi-tech electronic outdoor sites on the continent.”<sup>105</sup> In an interview with *Bizcommunity*, a South African based online news site, Edgar states that there is a “dire need of world-class tertiary training institutions” to tap into the potential Africa has in advertising. He believes advertising has a very bright future throughout the whole of Africa. He adds that his favorite campaign is The Zimbabwean newspaper “The Trillion Dollar Campaign” advertising. This is a very interesting billboard advertising that was used to shed light on the extreme poverty in Zimbabwe during the Mugabe regime. The ad was created by the South African ad agency TBWAHuntLascaris. Here is the story behind the campaign:

The Zimbabwean, a newspaper produced by a group of exiled Zimbabwean journalists.

The Zimbabwean is sold in the UK, South Africa and Zimbabwe but when entering the

latter is charged an import duty of 55 per cent, making it unaffordable to the average

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<sup>105</sup> “Loeries Creative Week Durban.” *Bizcommunity.com - Daily Marketing & Media News*. Web. 11 Mar. 2017.

Zimbabwean. To raise awareness of this, and to encourage more sales of the paper in South Africa, wall murals, billboards and flyers have been created in Johannesburg using the Z\$100 trillion dollars note, a symbol of the country's world record inflation. Worth less than paper, The Zimbabwean has turned the money into its advertising, hoping to raise awareness of the dire situation in the country under the Mugabe regime.<sup>106</sup>

This advertising in such a simple yet very powerful way sends a strong message about the state of the country. It resonated with so many people, not only because it was creative and strategic but because it is a true reflection of what was going on in the country.

Albeit negative, an advertising of Amy Biehl Foundation Trust in South Africa also reflects an aspect of the society. The advertising shows a number of children in a poor region of South Africa, they tell their names and what they are likely to become in the future.<sup>107</sup> The answers however are very negative, they strike a chord in the viewers. When children are asked these kinds of questions the answers are usually positive and optimistic. But these children say they are likely to be in jail or have AIDS or be robbers and killers in the future. This in fact does happen to children in South Africa and other parts of the continent when they grow up in an environment such as the one seen in this commercial. The sound of sirens played in the background as each child speaks. It is such a chilling but honest advertising. The copy at the end of the ad reads, "With no education, this is a likely future." Amy Biehl Foundation Trust is a non-for profit organization that offers educational programs in South Africa.<sup>108</sup>

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<sup>106</sup> Eliza Williams. "The Zimbabwean's Trillion Dollar Campaign." *Creative Review*. 01 Apr. 2009. Web. 11 Mar. 2017.

<sup>107</sup> Switch group sa. "Amy Biehl Banned Advert South Africa." *YouTube*. YouTube, 15 Sept. 2012. Web. 16 Apr. 2017. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hvg0k4rQbRs>

<sup>108</sup> *The Amy Biehl Foundation, Perpetuating Amy's Work in South Africa*. N.p., n.d. Web. 16 Apr. 2017. <http://www.amybiehl.org/>

It can be said that while advertisers in Africa aim to sell their product, services or ideas by marketing a more sophisticated image of Africa, they also endeavor to reflect the society they are targeting, because refusal to do so will result in an unsuccessful campaign. Several failed and banned advertising in different countries on the continent demonstrates this. So, the more strategic and savvy advertisers make an effort to reflect at least one aspect of the society in their campaign. A great example of this is the heartwarming New Bell's beer advertising in South Africa. The television advertising titled "The Reader", tells the story of a man learning how to read English in his old age, after he sees a poster of his son who has become a published author. The old man takes classes, borrows books from the library, practices with friends, and eventually he was able to read. He met up with his son at the bar and announces proudly that he read the son's book. The son was moved to tears and we could see the happiness in him. Then he ordered that the bar man gives his father a Bell's.<sup>109</sup>

English is a global language, and the ability to read and write English makes it easier for people in Africa to connect with each other and people from other parts of the world. Also, poverty is linked to illiteracy, therefore adult education is highly encouraged in African countries. South Africa in particular is very proactive in adult education. There are about 3.3 million illiterate adults in South Africa. Adult Basic Education and Training (ABET) is a policy enacted to deal with this issue. According to the program's website, "Adult basic education and training is the general conceptual foundation towards lifelong learning and development, comprising of knowledge, skills and attitudes required for social, economic and political participation and transformation applicable to a range of contexts. ABET is flexible, developmental and targeted at the specific needs of particular audiences and, ideally, provides

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<sup>109</sup> Bells whisky sa. "New Bell's South Africa TV Ad -- The Reader." *YouTube*. YouTube, 30 Jan. 2014. Web. 15 Apr. 2017. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VteDp3IK-60>

access to nationally recognized certificates.”<sup>110</sup> So, the Bell’s advertising although was promoting the beer brand, was also reflecting an aspect of the society.

Advertising from Africa also reveals the many progress taking place in the continent. This is not often portrayed in the western world. The 2012 “I love Africa” Coca Cola television advertising, sends very powerful messages about the continent. The copy reads:

“While the world shakes and stumbles Africa dances to a different beat. For every bank bailed out, 2 million Africans send money back home. 1 in 5 European Club Players is African, and millions more are ready to shine. As authorities try to tame the Internet, Africa becomes the most mobile-connected place on the planet. For every international brand trying to sell a song, 5000 African bands go live. The world's most admired man is African and so is the most beautiful woman. Why the world turns grey, we live life in full colour. While the world worries about the future, 1 billion Africans are sharing a Coke.”<sup>111</sup>

Advertising such as the Coca Cola commercial targeting the entire continent, highlighting the many accomplishments of Africans, presenting unity and exhibiting pride in Africa is not uncommon. The 2014 Guinness “Made of Black” television campaign is an excellent example of this. The commercial was created by Abbott Mead Vickers BBDO, a UK advertising agency and have received 26 awards. It is a visually stunning commercial that sends powerful messages about being black, similar to its print counterpart that features hip hop artists in the continent, messages such as, “Black is not a Colour”, “Black is a Mindset”, “Black Creates”, “Black is an

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<sup>110</sup> "ABET - Adult Basic Education and Training." *ABET - Adult Basic Education and Training*. Web. 12 Mar. 2017.

<sup>111</sup> Best ads Kenya. “I Love You Africa Coca Cola Ad TV.” *YouTube*. YouTube, 12 Apr. 2012. Web. 12 Mar. 2017.

Attitude”, “Black Got Swag”, “Black Dances to a Different Beat”, “Black Says Why Not”, “Black Writes its Own Rules”, and “Black Believes”.<sup>112</sup>

While advertising does reflect the society, the opinions of advertising critics cannot be easily dismissed, since advertising does have the power to influence. In the article, “Advertising and Cultural Values: Reflections in the Distorted Mirror”, mentioned earlier, advertising scholar, Richard W. Pollay, discusses the cultural impact of advertising. He refers to advertising as the distorted mirror because advertising reflects only certain attitudes, values and behaviors. He argues that “with selective reinforcement of values by advertising feedback into the culture, cultural evolution can be expected toward the values seen in commercial communication.”<sup>113</sup> In other words, advertising has the ability to shape or direct the course of culture. Pollay adds that advertising influences awareness, attitudes, feelings, preferences and behaviors.

Advertising expert Emmanuel Alozie agrees with this analysis that advertising has the ability to shape culture. He believes advertising in Nigeria led to a cultural shift from traditional to western values and critiques this extensively in the book *Capitalist Realism in Africa Realities and Myths in Advertising* reviewed earlier. His advertising analysis is based on semiotics. Symbols, Alozie states, “serve as repositories of cultural meaning” and so therefore “are capable of exerting significant influence over their target audience, and may be used to great effect by advertisers.”<sup>114</sup> His analysis looks at types of symbols in advertising, African oriented symbols, Universal symbols, positive/neutral, and western oriented symbols. According to Alozie, African-oriented symbols are believed to promote core African cultural values such as “respect

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<sup>112</sup> Bbdo, Amv. "Guinness - Made of Black | New Guinness Africa by AMV BBDO - Television." *AdForum.com*. N.p., n.d. Web. 16 Apr. 2017. <http://www.adforum.com/creative-work/ad/player/34501775/made-of-black-new-guinness-africa/guinness>

<sup>113</sup> Pollay, Richard W. "On the Value of Reflections on the Values in "The Distorted Mirror"." (*Journal of Marketing* 51.3 1987) 108. *JSTOR [JSTOR]*. Web. 15 Apr. 2017.

<sup>114</sup> Emmanuel C Alozie. “*Capitalist Realism*” in *Africa Realities and Myths in Advertising*. (Sharjah: Bentham Science, 2015) 7.

for old age, respect for nature, the role of the supreme God.” Universal symbols are considered positive/neutral, so are photos and graphics of products and services. But western symbols are considered negative because they “promote western values and consumerism”.<sup>115</sup> Critics believe western symbols “contribute to the decline of African values, are detrimental to economic development, and promote consumerism in an economy of scarcity.” And that “modern advertising serves to superimpose on the Third World western economic values that distort and demean traditional local values.”<sup>116</sup>

Alozie condemns a number of ads for promoting western values. A print commercial by Sharp audio equipment was deemed negative. Alozie describes the ad and states that “although the primary aim of symbols in this advertisement is to emphasize the high product quality, a close critical reading demonstrates it also promotes pleasure, eroticism, inequality, and western ideals of beauty.”<sup>117</sup> Alozie interprets this as telling “Nigerian consumers they can escape hardship if they use Sharp’s audio product to listen to music.”<sup>118</sup> He censures also the use of white models in the commercial, he states that this could be “construed as indicating superiority of westerners and their values.”<sup>119</sup> Therefore this advertising is considered negative. Alozie criticizes also a Delta soap advertising. For promoting western values. While the advertising copy promotes the soap as a germ fighter, the pictures are of young beautiful female models, signifying the product as a beauty aid.<sup>120</sup> Alozie notes that “this could send misleading messages to unsophisticated consumers in a developing country like Nigeria. Considering the Nigerian core value of family, it would have been useful to show a parent bathing his or her child with the

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<sup>115</sup> Emmanuel C. Alozie “*Capitalist Realism*”, 7.

<sup>116</sup> Emmanuel C. Alozie “*Capitalist Realism*”, 7.

<sup>117</sup> Emmanuel C. Alozie “*Capitalist Realism*”, 41-42.

<sup>118</sup> Emmanuel C. Alozie “*Capitalist Realism*”, 41-42.

<sup>119</sup> Emmanuel C. Alozie “*Capitalist Realism*”, 41-42.

<sup>120</sup> Emmanuel C. Alozie “*Capitalist Realism*”, 47 -48.

soap.”<sup>121</sup> Needless to say, an advertising such as this is equally considered negative. A commercial for Honda is also censured for this same reason. The Honda ad features a man and a woman clinging to each other as they return from the seaside to their car. According to Alozie, this ad shows “the freedom western youths enjoy and the free spirit the product offers.”<sup>122</sup> He condemns the ad for the skimpy attire and the public display of affection. He states that “Nigerian cultural values discourage public displays of intimacy and shun wearing skimpy attire. For a young couple to display intimacy and to expose their bodies in public is viewed as wild, unbecoming, and unwholesome. The use of such a picture is an example of advertising transplanting foreign values in Nigeria”<sup>123</sup>

Alozie cites one example of an advertising that he believes promotes African values. He states that images of children are used to urge parents to be responsible for their children’s upbringing and adds that “Taking into consideration the premium that Nigerian parents place on rearing and educating their children. CTC International School offers a head-shot of one female pupil wearing a traditional hair style, her face beaming with confidence to urge parents to build a prosperous future for their children by investing in education.”<sup>124</sup> While Alozie is correct on the notion that this advertising promotes the value of African parents being responsible for their children’s future, he fails to add that this advertising also promote a western idea, “The child in the picture nurses a dream of owning her own business as an adult, “Someday, people are going to work for me.”<sup>125</sup> The child in the picture is female. The idea of a woman becoming a boss is arguably a western one, since Nigeria is a patriarchal society. Therefore, promoting female

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<sup>121</sup> Emmanuel C. Alozie “*Capitalist Realism*”, 48.

<sup>122</sup> Emmanuel C. Alozie “*Capitalist Realism*”, 48.

<sup>123</sup> Emmanuel C. Alozie “*Capitalist Realism*”, 48.

<sup>124</sup> Emmanuel C. Alozie “*Capitalist Realism*”, 45.

<sup>125</sup> Emmanuel C. Alozie “*Capitalist Realism*”, 45.

education and independence is not in keeping with traditional Nigerian values. Advertising such as this while considered “African-oriented” and positive is not free from western influences.

Critics like Alozie are quick to condemn modern advertising in Africa for promoting western culture. But it can be argued that not all western values are negative. Also, the world has become so globalized that there are many exchange of cultures taking place in the continent which makes it difficult to isolate a set of values as being purely “African”. But if we want to differentiate, then it can be argued that some western influences have enabled Africans to be able to advance with the rest of the globalizing world. Western influences on the continent are bringing about technological advancements, increasing knowledge, creating modern infrastructures, helping to improve healthcare, manufacturing capabilities, and helping to combat poverty. And as African scholar Karin Barber notes, Africans “became aware not only that other ethnic-cultural traditions existed, but also for imitation, borrowing or synthesis.”<sup>126</sup> This is considered a positive thing.

Positive imitation of western values is apparent in an advertising such as the 2016 Always “#MyFutureStartsToday” produced in Nigeria. The commercial imitates the popular American “#Likeagirl” Always campaign<sup>127</sup>. Advertising such as these challenging gender norms and promoting gender equality and feminism are becoming common in Africa. The Nigeria version of the Always campaign shows three young girls being interviewed about what they would like to be in the future. A girl answers, “a pilot”, another answers, “a naval officer,” and the third answers, “an auto engineer”. Then the interviewer asks the girls if they are confident they could achieve these goals. The girls answered with how people tell them it is not

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<sup>126</sup> *Media and Identity in Africa*, 7.

<sup>127</sup> "OUR EPIC BATTLE #LIKEAGIRL." *Our Epic Battle #LikeAGirl | Always*. N.p., n.d. Web. 15 Apr. 2017. <http://always.com/en-us/about-us/our-epic-battle-like-a-girl>

what women do, how people laugh at them and how that makes them feel discouraged. The copy on the screen reads “61% of girls do not feel they have the right support to pursue their preferred career choice”. But advertising such as this is challenging those traditional notions of what careers women can or cannot have. The interviewer then introduced a female naval captain in Nigeria who narrated her story. She started flying at the age of 17 and become a captain at 25. She says, “yes you’re a girl, your dreams are valid, believe you can”.<sup>128</sup> In a patriarchal society, such as Nigeria, sending positive messages like these to young women is important. At the end of the ad, a scholarship and mentorship opportunity was promoted. Girls between the ages of 11 and 16 are asked to write an essay titled “My Future Starts Today, My Dream Career” for the opportunity to win the scholarship. In addition to sending a positive message, this advertising is actively enforcing social change by encouraging girls to pursue their dreams. A similar version of this commercial with the message “#MyFutureStartsToday” is also produced in other African countries to build confidence and encourage the successes of young African girls.

A contraceptive advertising created in Ghana can also be pointed at as an example of an imitation of western values. Traditional Ghanaian values uphold the idea of a woman keeping her virginity till marriage and the idea that a wife should not refuse her husband’s sexual advances because it is his marital right. But this commercial reveals how outdated these ideas are. The 2014 Lydia contraceptive television advertising sends the message that the woman decides. The advertisement titled, “You Decide”<sup>129</sup>, present women in different situations where their partner is asking them for sex. Stating that a woman decides is in keeping with feminist ideologies. What this reveal is that Africans are becoming more modernized and are subscribing to western ideologies of feminism and women’s rights. This is a major shift from more

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<sup>128</sup> Pg Nigeria. “Always #MyFutureStartsToday.” *YouTube*. YouTube, 29 Aug. 2016. Web. 12 Mar. 2017.

<sup>129</sup> DKTHQ. “DKT Ghana Lydia ‘You Decide’ Ad.” *YouTube*. YouTube, 04 Aug. 2014. Web. 12 Mar. 2017.

traditional Ghanaian perception that a woman is her husband's property. This advertising demonstrates the ideological changes taking place in Ghana and other countries in the continent.

Other advertising also reveal how Africans are beginning to live a lifestyle of ease through technology. A Vodafone television advertisement for example shows a college classroom in Ghana. In this commercial, a female student who was in the process of trying to change the sim card on her phone broke her nail. Her classmate inquired as to the reason why she had so many sim cards in the first place. She explains that one is for international call, one for cheap calls and one because the network is clearer. But the classmate tells her that with Vodafone Red she does not need several sim cards because it fulfils all these functions and more.<sup>130</sup> Another great advertising that demonstrates this convenient lifestyle afforded through technology is the Airtel money Tap 'N' Pay advertising. The funny advertising shows how a rude male customer in the grocery store keeps getting in the way of these two other shoppers. The rude shopper would quickly grab a product about to be taken by the other two shoppers, a man and a woman. The woman gets angry and attempts to confront the rude shopper but her partner prevents her because he had an idea of how to teach the other man a lesson. When they arrived at the counter, again, the rude shopper disregards the other shoppers on the line and rushes to the counter before his turn. The couple moves to the other counter and within seconds were done paying, while the rude man was still counting his cash to pay for his purchases. In the end, they finished their shopping before he did, despite his hastiness and rudeness. This was because they used Airtel Tap 'N' Pay, which just requires that shoppers tap their phone on the Airtel Tap 'N' Pay device in the store, and they are good to go.<sup>131</sup>

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<sup>130</sup> VodafoneGhana. "Vodafone RED TV Commercial." *YouTube*. YouTube, 12 Dec. 2013. Web. 12 Mar. 2017.

<sup>131</sup> Airtel Gh. "'Tap 'N' Pay'" *YouTube*. YouTube, 30 July 2015. Web. 12 Mar. 2017.

An advertising of Tigo Cash a mobile financial service demonstrates this same idea of the lifestyle of ease technology is bringing to Africans.<sup>132</sup> The television commercial shows a woman cleaning the house as a husband and his friends watch TV and dirty up the house. She expresses her frustration by switching off the TV and asking her husband if he has sent money to several people including the landlord as he was supposed to. He answers yes over and over again, so she could not really find anything to fault him with. The idea is that with Tigo Cash, sending money (which is considered the husband's duty) is as easy and fast as a few taps on the phone, which leaves the man plenty of time to watch television with his friends and also saves him from his wife's anger. These modern advertising reveals a different aspect of Africa; the desire to catch up with the rest of the world, the rich culture in the continent and the technological innovation and advancement taking place. Aspects more or less absent from the popular representation of the continent in the west.

### **VIII. Conclusion**

While the dominant narratives and images of Africa in the west continues to model previous centuries perception of the continent by portraying the continent's challenges. Advertising images and narratives emerging from the continent tells a different story. Businesses in the continent and advertisers are responsible for this different narrative of Africa. This paper has argued that in order to sell to the booming and complex African consumers, businesses and advertisers market a more appealing image of Africa. This image I contend, reflects the social, ideological, economic, and technological changes taking place in Africa as the world becomes more globalized. These changes are influencing the lifestyles, behaviors, culture and beliefs of

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<sup>132</sup> Tigo Ghana. "Tigo Cash Ghana TV Advert, Game Time!" *YouTube*. YouTube, 19 Oct. 2012. Web. 16 Apr. 2017. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=x9TNNi4kHLA>

Africans and these are reflected in African advertising and advertising produced in Africa. I have presented this argument using several examples of modern advertising produced in different countries in the African continent, and media and advertising analysis from both Western and African scholars. An analysis of advertising reveals a different aspect of the continent. An aspect that is absent in the popular images and narratives of the continent in the western world. What this analysis does is open up the possibilities of perceiving Africa differently in the west. By differently, I mean a perception that is divorced from the definitive one that views the continent in the context of its challenges, namely poverty, political instability, and corruption. As proven by this paper, these negative aspects do not define the continent.

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