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Audience Perception of Female News Anchors: A Study of Africa Independent Television (AIT)

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Abstract

This study examined the perception of mass communication students on female news anchors in Africa Independent Television (AIT). The purpose of the study is to determine viewers perception on the physical characteristics of female news anchors on Africa Independent Television (AIT); whether viewers' attention is diverted from the news by the appearance of these anchors; and whether viewers' attention is affected by their physical appearance. . The study was guided by Social Perception Theory. Using survey method quantitative approach was used. The population of this study made of 5032 students in Federal Polytechnic Bauchi within period of the study (Academic Unit, 2024). 346 sample size was used. In gathering the data, questionnaire was used. Data of the study was analyzed using descriptive analysis. The sstudy indicated that, the appearance is generally viewed positively; certain aspects of attire may inadvertently cause distraction. The study conclude that, the perception of Mass Communication students regarding female television news anchors on Africa Independent Television (AIT) is generally positive, emphasizing

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professionalism, competence, and credibility. It is recommended that, AIT should continue to promote gender equality by ensuring equal representation of male and female anchors across all news programs.

Keywords: News Anchors, African Independent Television (AIT), Audience perception, Female News Anchors

INTRODUCTION

The core aspect of television channels is news presentation. Newscasters and anchors are prepared to deliver news to a wide range of diverse audiences. The news is read by young, attractive female news anchors on television stations. Viewers' attention can be captured by the female news anchor's physical attractiveness, different of audiences have various perspectives on how the female news anchor looks.

Television news presentation encompasses a range of elements that contribute to the overall quality and effectiveness of a news broadcast (Ogri, 2018) From the visual aesthetics of the set design to the technical aspects of the production process, television news presentation plays a critical role in engaging the audience and conveying information effectively.

Umukoro and Okoro (2017) stated that the design of a news is an important aspect of television news presentation, creating a visually appealing backdrop for the news anchor and other presenters. The news anchor is a central figure in television news presentations, serving as the primary presenter and communicator of information to the audience (Bracken, 2016). The primary role of the news anchor is to deliver the news to the audience clearly and concisely to ensure the credibility and trustworthiness of the news broadcast. Aside from delivering news updates, news anchors often conduct interviews with guests, experts, and reporters to provide additional context, analysis, and perspective on news stories. The sexual appeal of female news anchors, according to Garbe and Samson (2019), diverts attention from the retention of memories on news content. Visual news presentation may offer more news credibility than traditional styles, (Cummins and Chambers 2011). Providing feedback on news presentations and how they enhance viewer appeal Rahman, Rajeb, Akter, Andaleeb, and Gulshan (2012)

However, the audience perception of female television news anchors among students in tertiary institutions in Nigeria is shaped by cultural, historical, and media-related factors. Therefore, the contributing factor of the perception of mass communication students on female television news anchors in Africa Independent Television (AIT) is the aim of this study. Despite advancements, female television news anchors in Nigeria encounter unique challenges. Gender bias, unequal opportunities, and societal expectations may impact their career trajectories. Exploring these challenges is crucial for understanding audience perceptions, as these factors can influence how Mass communication students view female anchors. As shown by several studies, watching news on TV is linked to attractive people (Miller & Rovenbank, 2009; Jenner, 2019). The study by Akpoghiran, Umukoro, and Okoro (2017) investigated how television viewers perceive the looks of female newsreaders and how this affects their attention to the news. The social perception theory, which describes how people create opinions and draw conclusions about others, served as the foundation for the investigation. The physical attributes of female newsreaders were examined in the following categories: voice quality, haircut, makeup/facial expression, and outfit or apparel. We looked at three cable TV stations. They were Channels and the Nigerian Television Authority (NTA).

Television channels and Independent African Television (AIT) showed that the look of female newsreaders has an impact on viewers' attention span during the first few minutes of the news, according to the findings Male audience are drawn to the beauty of the face, while female viewers are drawn to the overall physical appearance. The significance of this is that if a female newsreader applies a sexually attractive appearance, it will divert A multistage cluster sampling technique was used to conduct a survey for a study by Andaleeb, Rahman, Rajeb, Akter, and Gulshan (2012) titled Credibility of TV News in a Developing Country: The Case of Bangladesh. The results of the study demonstrated that viewers found TV news to be more believable when it was presented by TV stations with greater experience in doing so. They also found that viewers found TV news to be more credible when it was presented with higher-quality audio-visual Webb, Mitra, and Wolfe in 2014. Through the use of 167 questionnaires and 20 semi-structured interviews with male and female viewers, the study examined the perspectives of people who watch television news with regard to the look of news presenters. According to the survey, audiences were aware that female newsreaders might have been picked specifically for their beauty. According to the survey, a significant number of participants felt that this was rather unfair.

Bernice et al (2022) aimed to determine how viewers viewed news credibility to television news broadcasts.. A structured questionnaire was used to collect data from 392 respondents in Oshogbo city using easy sampling in order to meet the study's goals. The results of the study showed that most respondents believed that news casters are more appealing when they dress in a western fashion, but they disagreed that this factor influenced their assessment of news credibility.

. A large percentage of respondents disagreed that a news presenter's gender had any effect on their opinion of the news' reliability, despite agreeing that female news presenters were more attractive and cast more frequently than their male colleagues due to their appearance. The study also showed that the news substance, the presenter's voice, and other aesthetic and individual characteristics could affect how something is seen. The study came to the conclusion that broadcast organizations, particularly television, have a better chance of increasing source attractiveness and news credibility when they adopt the practice of balancing gender and other aspects of news credibility. This, in turn, makes the news organization more likable to television viewers.

The impact of gender appeals on television news audience consumption was examined in a study. Agba, Henshaw, and Ogri (2018) conducted a critical analysis of the notions that gender influences broadcasters' persuasive abilities and that male and female broadcasters encounter different gender-based obstacles. In-depth interviews and a questionnaire were employed in this survey-based study to gather feedback from broadcast scholars, professionals, and members of the public. Six broadcast communication scholars from higher institutions and 219 respondents from Calabar Metropolis were chosen using the multistage and purposive sample approaches. The theoretical foundation was provided by the Elaboration Likelihood Theory. According to the study's findings, female newscasters are just as credible as their male counterparts, and physical appearance has no bearing on

Social Perception Theory

This study adopted the Social Perception Theory Fritz Heider put together the theory in the 20th century (Kelly & Michela, 1980; Smith & Mackie, 2000). . An individual's emotions, cognitive load capability, and motivation at the moment all influence how they perceive social situations, shaping different individuals' social perceptions. This collectively impact how individuals perceive and assign particular characteristics. v

When people make attributions they are able to make judgments as to what was the cause of certain behaviour. It seeks to understand how people attach meaning to others' behaviour or our own.

Social perception theory is the best approach to understand the perception of mass communication students on female television news anchors in Africa Independent Television (AIT). This is due to the social perception theory, which states that viewers of television evaluate news anchors based on what they see and think about their appearance. It describes how viewers of television attributed different interpretations to the clothes worn by news anchors and how they shaped the environment around them. Based on their perceptions, viewers assign or pass judgment on the appearance of female news anchors. As it is, viewers of television give diverse interpretations to the physical appearance of news anchors.

Social perception theory is closely linked to Identification Postulation of Social Cognitive Theory, social perception theory explains how television audience/viewers construct meanings from what they see, hear or read and what attribution they make to media texts. It involves looking at the ways social phenomena are created, institutionalized, known and made into tradition by humans. Female news anchor‟s physical appearance on television is used in this case. Television viewers could make meanings or make attributions to what female newsreader wear while reading news.

The purpose of this study is to ascertain the perception of Mass communication student on female television news anchors in Africa Independent Television (AIT).

Objectives of the Study

i. To understand how audiences regard female news anchors appearance on Africa Independent Television (AIT);
ii. Tto determine whether viewers' attention to the news is influenced by the physical attractiveness of female news anchors;
iii. To know whether the physical appearance or attire of female news anchors distract viewers' attention to the news.

Research Questions

i. What are viewers' perceptions of female news anchors appearance on Africa Independent Television (AIT)?

ii. Does physical appearance of the female news anchors affect viewers' attention to the news?

iii. Does physical appearance or attire of female news anchors distract viewers' attention and attitude towards news message?

METHODS

The study was conducted in Federal Polytechnic Bauchi, Department of Mass

Communication using, a cross-sectional survey research design, adopting the multiple sampling technique with a population of 5032,obtained from the Academic Unit, . To further get the sample size for 3518 which is the population of ten (10) selected departments in this study within the period of the research .Using Krejcie and Morgan (1970) the table for determining sample size; for a population size of 3518, the sample size was 346.

Stage 1: The first stage involved selecting schools. Hence, the simple random sampling technique was adopted using ruffle to select three (3) wards out of six (6) (School of Agriculture Technology, School of Science Technology, School of General Studies, School of Environmental Technology, School of Engineering, School of Business Studies) that constitute FPTB. To arrive , three schools was selected: (School of Science technology, School of General Studies, School of Business Studies).

Stage 2: Strata selection the next stage of the sampling process involved the selection of ten (10) departments from the three (3) school chosen earlier using simple random sampling technique. A total of 346 copies of questionnaire were distributed. However, only 312 copies of the questionnaire were retrieved, valid and analyzed 3.3.1: Sample Size

Table 1: Sample Size

S/N	Departments	Population	Size
1.	Computer Science	773	76
2.	Science Laboratory Technology	666	65
3.	Hospitality Management	124	12
4.	Food Technology	134	13
5.	Library and Information Science	159	16

6.	Mass communication	578	57
7.	Marketing	133	13
8.	Public Administration	444	44
9.	Banking and Finance	142	14
10.	Accountancy	365	36
	Total	**3518**	**346**

Source: Academic Unit (2024)

Table 2: Demographic of Respondents

Variables	Category	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	152	48.7
	Female	160	51.3
	Total	**312**	**100.0**
Age Bracket	18-24 years	180	57.7
	25-31 years	70	22.4
	32-38 years	42	13.5
	39 years & above	20	6.4
	Total	**312**	**100.0**
Academic Level	ND I	90	28.8
	ND II	80	25.6
	HND I	70	22.4
	HND II	72	23.1
	Total	**312**	**100.0**

Source: Field Work, 2024

In Table 2 shows that, majority of respondents were male 52 (48.7%) while 160 (51.3%) are female. The distribution is relatively balanced, with a slight majority of female respondents.

The Table 2 also reveals that, the majority of the students (57.7%) are within the 18-24 years age bracket. This indicates that most of the students are relatively young, fitting within the typical age range for undergraduate students. A smaller proportion of students falls within the 25-31 years bracket (22.4%), while even fewer are in the 32-38 years bracket (13.5%) and 39 years and above (6.4%).

The Table 2 also shows that, ND I students make up 28.8% of the sample, followed by ND II at 25.6%, HND I at 22.4%, and HND II at 23.1%. This distribution suggests ND I students consists this study, this may because ND II and HND II students were busy with research project and course work.

Data Presentation

Table 3. Television Ownership

Television Ownership	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Yes	210	67.3
No	102	32.7
Total	**312**	**100.0**

Source: Field Survey, 2024

Table 3 shows, the majority of Mass Communication students (67.3%) own a television set, while 32.7% do not own one. This indicates that a significant proportion of the students have direct access to television content, which is important for forming perceptions about female news anchors on AIT.

Table 4: The Appearance of Female News Anchors on AIT is Professional and appropriate for a News Setting

Response	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Strongly Agree	120	38.5
Agree	100	32.1
Neutral	40	12.8
Disagree	32	10.3
Strongly Disagree	20	6.4
Total	**312**	**100.0**

Source: Field Survey, 2024

Table 4. reveals that, a substantial portion of respondents felt that the appearance of female news anchors on AIT is professional and appropriate for a news setting, with 38.5% strongly agreeing and 32.1% agreeing. A minority of respondents (12.8%) remained neutral, while 16.7% disagreed.

Table 5: I Believe that the Appearance of Female News Anchors on AIT Enhances Their Credibility as Journalists

Response	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Strongly Agree	110	35.3
Agree	95	30.4
Neutral	50	16.0
Disagree	38	12.2
Strongly Disagree	19	6.1
Total	**312**	**100.0**

Source: Field Survey, 2024

Table 5 indicates that, most respondents (35.3% strongly agree, 30.4% agree) believe that the appearance of female news anchors on AIT enhances their credibility as journalists, with a combined 65.7% holding a positive view. About 16.0% were neutral, while 18.3% disagreed.

Table 6: The Physical Appearance of Female News Anchors on AIT Reflects the Standards of Modern Television Broadcasting

Response	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Strongly Agree	130	41.7
Agree	85	27.2
Neutral	40	12.8
Disagree	35	11.2
Strongly Disagree	22	7.1
Total	**312**	**100.0**

Source: Field Survey, 2024

Table 6 indicates that, a significant number of respondents (41.7% strongly agree, 27.2% agree) perceive the physical appearance of female news anchors on AIT as reflective of the standards of modern television broadcasting, indicating a strong positive view (68.9%). Only 19.9% of the respondents either disagreed or were neutral, suggesting broad acceptance of the current visual standards.

Table 7: The Appearance of Female News Anchors on AIT is a Significant Factor in My Overall Perception of the News

Response	**Frequency**	**Percentage (%)**
Strongly Agree	125	40.1
Agree	90	28.8
Neutral	45	14.4
Disagree	30	9.6
Strongly Disagree	22	7.1
Total	**312**	**100.0**

Source: Field Survey, 2024

Table 7 shows that, approximately 68.9% of respondents agreed (40.1% strongly agree, 28.8% agree) that the appearance of female news anchors on AIT significantly influences their overall perception of the news. A smaller proportion remained neutral (14.4%), while 16.7% disagreed. This result indicates that appearance plays a substantial role in shaping how news is received by viewers.

Table 8: The Appearance of Female News Anchors on AIT Positively Influences My Trust in the News They Deliver

Response	**Frequency**	**Percentage (%)**
Strongly Agree	115	36.9
Agree	100	32.1
Neutral	50	16.0
Disagree	30	9.6
Strongly Disagree	17	5.4
Total	**312**	**100.0**

Table 8 reveals that, a combined 69% of respondents indicated that the appearance of female news anchors positively influences their trust in the news delivered on AIT, with 36.9% strongly agreeing and 32.1% agreeing. In contrast, 16% remained neutral, and only 15% disagreed.

Table 9: The Physical Appearance of Female News Anchors on AIT Helps Me Stay Focused on the News Being Presented

Response	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Strongly Agree	105	33.7
Agree	95	30.4
Neutral	55	17.6
Disagree	40	12.8
Strongly Disagree	17	5.4
Total	**312**	**100.0**

Source: Field Survey, 2024

Table 9 shows that, many respondents (33.7% strongly agree, 30.4% agree) reported that the physical appearance of female news anchors helps them stay focused on the news, with 64.1% expressing a positive view. Meanwhile, 17.6% were neutral, and 18.2% disagreed.

Table 10: I Find that the Appearance of Female News Anchors on AIT Keeps My Attention on the Content of the News

Response	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Strongly Agree	125	40.1
Agree	100	32.1
Neutral	50	16.0
Disagree	22	7.1
Strongly Disagree	15	4.8
Total	**312**	**100.0**

Source: Field Survey, 2024

Table 10 shows that. a total of 72.2% of respondents agreed (40.1% strongly agree, 32.1% agree) that the appearance of female news anchors helps keep their attention on the news content, underscoring the importance of appearance in retaining audience focus. A smaller percentage either remained neutral (16%) or disagreed (11.9%).

Table 11: The Professional Appearance of Female News Anchors on AIT Enhances My Concentration on the News

Response	**Frequency**	**Percentage (%)**
Strongly Agree	110	35.3
Agree	105	33.7
Neutral	55	17.6
Disagree	30	9.6
Strongly Disagree	12	3.8
Total	**312**	**100.0**

Source: Field Survey, 2024

Table 11 reveals that, majority (69%) of respondents agreed (35.3% strongly agree, 33.7% agree) that the professional appearance of female news anchors enhances their concentration on the news. About 17.6% remained neutral, while 13.4% disagreed.

Table 12: I Believe that the Physical Appearance of Female News Anchors on AIT Plays a Role in Keeping Viewers Engaged with the News

Response	**Frequency**	**Percentage (%)**
Strongly Agree	115	36.9
Agree	100	32.1
Neutral	45	14.4
Disagree	35	11.2
Strongly Disagree	17	5.4
Total	**312**	**100.0**

Table 12 shows that, most respondents (36.9% strongly agree, 32.1% agree) felt that the physical appearance of female news anchors plays a role in keeping viewers engaged with the news. Only 14.4% were neutral, and 16.6% disagreed. This indicates that visual elements are crucial for engaging viewers.

Table 13: The Attire of Female News Anchors on AIT Sometimes Distracts Me from Focusing on the News Content

Response	**Frequency**	**Percentage (%)**
Strongly Agree	95	30.4
Agree	90	28.8
Neutral	60	19.2
Disagree	40	12.8
Strongly Disagree	27	8.7
Total	**312**	**100.0**

Source: Field Survey, 2024

Table 13 indicates that, a considerable percentage (30.4% strongly agree, 28.8% agree) agreed that the attire of female news anchors on AIT sometimes distracts them from focusing on the news content, with 59.2% expressing this view. Around 19.2% were neutral, while 21.5% disagreed. This finding suggests that while appearance is generally viewed positively, certain aspects of attire may inadvertently cause distraction.

Table 14: I Find that the Physical Appearance of Female News Anchors on AIT Can Occasionally Draw Attention Away from the News Being Reported

Response	**Frequency**	**Percentage (%)**
Strongly Agree	105	33.7
Agree	95	30.4
Neutral	50	16.0

Disagree	35	11.2
Strongly Disagree	27	8.7
Total	**312**	**100.0**

Source: Field Survey, 2024

Table 14 shows that, 64.1% of respondents reported that the physical appearance of female news anchors could occasionally draw attention away from the news being reported, indicating that while appearance may engage viewers, it also has the potential to divert attention.

Table 15: The Choice of Clothing by Female News Anchors on AIT Sometimes Makes It Difficult to Concentrate on the News

Response	**Frequency**	**Percentage (%)**
Strongly Agree	90	28.8
Agree	85	27.2
Neutral	60	19.2
Disagree	50	16.0
Strongly Disagree	27	8.7
Total	**312**	**100.0**

Source: Field Survey, 2024

Table 15 shows that, more than half of the respondents (28.8% strongly agree, 27.2% agree) agreed that the choice of clothing by female news anchors sometimes makes it difficult to concentrate on the news, while 19.2% were neutral, and 24.7% disagreed. This further emphasizes the fine line between engaging viewers visually and maintaining focus on the news content.

Table 16: I Believe that Certain Aspects of Female News Anchors' Appearance on AIT Can Be Distracting During News Broadcasts

Response	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Strongly Agree	98	31.4
Agree	100	32.1
Neutral	60	19.2
Disagree	30	9.6
Strongly Disagree	24	7.7
Total	**312**	**100.0**

Source: Field Survey, 2024

Table 16 indicates that, majority of respondents (31.4% strongly agree, 32.1% agree) believe that certain aspects of female news anchors' appearance can be distracting during news broadcasts, with 63.5% supporting this view. This highlights the need for a balanced approach to visual presentation in news media.

Table 17: The Visual Presentation of Female News Anchors on AIT Occasionally Diverts My Attention from the News They Are Delivering

Response	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Strongly Agree	105	33.7
Agree	90	28.8
Neutral	55	17.6
Disagree	37	11.9
Strongly Disagree	25	8.0
Total	**312**	**100.0**

Source: Field Survey, 2024

Table 17 shows that over 62% of respondents agreed (33.7% strongly agree, 28.8% agree) that the visual presentation of female news anchors occasionally diverts their attention

from the news being delivered. A smaller proportion were neutral (17.6%) or disagreed (19.9%), showing that while visual appeal is necessary, it must be carefully managed to avoid overshadowing the content.

DISCUSSION

In answering the first question reference is made to Table 7 shows that, approximately

68.9% of respondents agreed (40.1% strongly agree, 28.8% agree) that the appearance of female news anchors on AIT significantly influences their overall perception of the news. A smaller proportion remained neutral (14.4%), while 16.7% disagreed. This result indicates that appearance plays a substantial role in shaping how news is received by viewers. Existing research corroborates the finding that the appearance of female anchors, including attire, makeup, and overall grooming, plays a significant role in shaping audience perceptions. Studies have long noted that television news audiences often judge female anchors based on their appearance more than their male counterparts. Similarly, another study by Atwell (2020) highlighted how female journalists in visual media face higher appearance expectations than males, which can directly impact viewers‟ trust and engagement. Rohlinger (2022) also found that female news anchors face scrutiny based on their physical appearance, which is perceived as a core element of their professional identity. This underscores how, even in African media, viewers hold similar perceptions as those in Western media regarding the appearance of female news anchors.

Table 14 shows that, 64.1% of respondents reported that the physical appearance of female news anchors could occasionally draw attention away from the news being reported, indicating that while appearance may engage viewers, it also has the potential to divert attention. This suggests that while appearance is important for viewer engagement, it may detract from the substance of the news being reported.

The finding of this study tends to affirm study conducted by Kanthimathi (2017), which revealed that, highly stylized or glamorous appearances of female anchors could reduce viewers' focus on the news, as more attention was directed toward superficial qualities.

Similarly, Franks (2013) highlights that female news anchors often face the dilemma of needing to balance professional appearance with avoiding being perceived as a distraction.

This mirrors the findings on AIT, where the physical appearance, while engaging, can also divert focus from the substance of the news.

Table 5 indicates that a considerable percentage (30.4% strongly agree, 28.8% agree) agreed that the attire of female news anchors on AIT sometimes distracts them from focusing on the news content, with 59.2% expressing this view. Around 19.2% were neutral, while 21.5% disagreed. This finding suggests that while appearance is generally viewed positively, certain aspects of attire may inadvertently cause distraction.

The finding of this study corroborate with the study conducted by Holland and McElroy (2019) which discussed how attire that deviates from expected norms, whether it is too casual or too formal, can create a sense of dissonance for viewers, pulling focus away from the content. Female anchors, in particular, have to navigate these expectations carefully to avoid being seen as "unprofessional" or "too glamorous

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the perception of Mass Communication students regarding female television news anchors on Africa Independent Television (AIT) is generally positive, emphasizing professionalism, competence, and credibility. While acknowledging the challenges and biases that female anchors face, these students see them as crucial contributors to news presentation and gender equality in the media. Their insights reflect a growing recognition of the importance of diversity and representation in media and the need to continue challenging gender stereotypes for a more inclusive and equitable media. As future media professionals, these students' perceptions contribute to significantly shape the directions of journalism and broadcasting in Nigeria and beyond. The Research was only exclusive to mass communication students on female news anchors in Africa Independent Television (AIT), further broader research needs to be made to have a more vast perception.

Recommendations

The recommendations were obtained from the study findings:

i. Broadcast Televisions should continue to promote gender equality by ensuring equal representation of male and female anchors across all news programs.

ii. Broadcast Televisions should invest in regular training and workshops on journalism ethics, investigative reporting, public speaking, and crisis management.

iii. **AIT** should actively work to address any gender biases and stereotypes that may exist within the organization or among its viewers.

iv. AIT should encourage viewer feedback and engagement through interactive platforms such as social media, surveys, and focus group discussions.

v. AIT should spotlight the achievements of female news anchors and their contributions to journalism. By featuring their stories, challenges, and successes, AIT can inspire young female students in Mass Communication and related fields to pursue careers in media.

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