



## PERCEPTION OF OWERRI RESIDENTS TOWARDS THE ADOPTION OF CROSS-DRESSING BY MALE COMEDIANS/MALE CONTENT CREATORS

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### ABSTRACT

This study focused on perception of Owerri residents towards the adoption of cross-dressing by male comedians/male content creators. Three research objectives were raised to guide the study guided the study. Survey research design was adopted and questionnaire served as the instrument for data collection. For data analysis, the researcher utilized simple percentage and chi-square. The findings revealed that the level of awareness of Owerri residents towards cross-dressing by male comedians/male content creators is high; Owerri residents perceived cross-dressing by male comedians/male content creators as positive; and firm, unique recognition and social identity are the major factors influencing male comedians/male content creators to adopt cross-dressing. Based on the findings, it was recommended that there is need to use social media to educate people about cross dressing so that people who are seeing it as negative will understand that its for only entertainment. Also, the government and media regulators should identify any comedian or content creator who is using cross dressing to promote same sex and bring such person to book. The study therefore conclude that cross dressing is a unique entertainment approach which many comedians and content creators have adopted to give uniqueness to their brand and achieve audience happiness and acceptance.

**Keywords:** Perception, cross-dressing, male comedians and male content creators

### Introduction

Before the new millennium, comedians and content creators were not known. Their existence has little or no much impact to the audience and they are not taken seriously; hence the occupation is not financially viable. However, the improve information and communication technologies in the 21<sup>st</sup> century changed the situation. This is because of the availability and accessibility of the internet and more specifically, the new media. For that, it can be inferred here that in this 21<sup>st</sup> century, one of the sectors that have contributed in socio-economic, cultural and social development of the people is entertainment industry. This is as a result of the facts that many young people now took entertainment (content creation and comedy) as profession and therefore are using their profession to make people happy. Comedy and content creation is the new oil magnet. Here, the onus lies on the entertainer (content creator or comedian) to ingeniously come up with novel ideas distinct from what is regular within the public domain (Davies & Ilott, 2018).

In an effort to make their audience happy and well entertained, many professionals in entertainment industry, especially male comedians adopt different strategies. One of such strategies is cross-dressing. According to Aja-Ugwu (2019) cross-dressing is one of the basic approaches adopts by male comedians to achieve audience preference, likeness, and grows their entertainment business. The major reasons for cross-dressing include to introduce unique identity to their brand, attract audience unique attention, enjoy attention and acceptance from male and female audience among others. According to Nwolu, Nnabuiife and Nnabuiife (2022), the basic essence of cross-dressing in comedy is to make people laugh. To them, it can be inferred by the number of prominent comic actors in the comedy industry that are adopting cross-dressing to achieve the goal of their entertainment. However, notwithstanding the views of the cross-dressers in entertaining people and achieving audience acceptance, the focus is how do the members of public, specifically those in Owerri, perceive cross-dressers in the comedy industry. The above is the focal point of this work.

### **Statement of the Problem**

In recent times, cross-dressing has become one of the strategies adopted by some comedians in the entertainment industry. In reality, the strategy has been attracting audience attention. Though some members of the public see it as a good strategy which has kept them entertained, others members of the public are not seeing it as positive. They are concern and see it as abnormal on how a male comedian will be performing claiming or assuming female gender. Some people see that as culturally, and religiously bad; hence male comedians are ought to perform as male and female comedians are ought to take female roles, and not the other way round. It is against this background that this study focused on perception of Owerri residents towards the adoption of cross-dressing by male comedians/male content creators.

### **Objectives of the Study**

The main objectives of this study focused on perception of Owerri residents towards the adoption of cross-dressing by male comedians/male content creators. The specific objectives include:

1. To analyze the extent of awareness of Owerri residents towards cross-dressing by male comedians/male content creators.
2. To determine if Owerri residents perceived cross-dressing by male comedians/male content creators positively or negatively.
3. To identify the major factors influencing male comedians/male content creators to adopt cross-dressing.

### **Research Hypotheses**

The following hypotheses are developed to answer the research questions stated above.

**H<sub>01</sub>:** The level of awareness of Owerri residents towards cross-dressing by male comedians/ male content creators is not high.

**H<sub>11</sub>:** The level of awareness of Owerri residents towards cross-dressing by male comedians/ male content creators is high.

**H<sub>02</sub>:** Owerri residents do not perceived cross-dressing by male comedians/male content creators as positive.

**H<sub>12</sub>:** Owerri residents perceived cross-dressing by male comedians/male content creators as positive.

**H<sub>03</sub>:** Firm, unique recognition and social identity are not the major factors influencing male comedians/male content creators to adopt cross-dressing.

**H<sub>13</sub>:** Firm, unique recognition and social identity are the major factors influencing male comedians/male content creators to adopt cross-dressing.

## **Conceptual Issues**

### **Cross-Dressing**

Cross-dressing is a situation where someone dressed like an opposite sex e.g. male dressing like female and female dressing like male. According to Nwolu, Nnabuiife and Nnabuiife (2022), cross-dressing is mainly a matter of comfort or style, personal preference for clothing associated with the opposite sex, to shock others, or challenge socially accepted norms i.e. men dress like women and women also dress like men. Mainly, male comedians are people mostly involved in cross-dressing. Iwalaiye (2022) view cross-dressing as a situation of putting on or wearing clothing or other things that is associated with an opposite gender which the person does not originally belong.

Cross-dressing ranges from simply wearing one or two items of clothing or other materials to a full-scale burlesque, from a comic impersonation to a serious attempt to pass as the opposite gender, from occasional desire to experiment with gender identity to attempting to live most of one's life a member of the opposite sex" (Devor 1993; Nwigwe, 2019). For them, whenever an opposite sex person start to wear or put on things meant for the other gender, there is cross dressing. In recent time, cross-dressing has been on the increase across the globe with variations in purpose for adopting the practice by the individuals, especially male comedians. In all, a cross-dresser is someone who belong to a particular gender, who intentionally (based on entertainment like comedy or other reasons) embraces the dressing of the opposite sex, thereby portraying his/herself to look like the opposite sex based on dressing.

### **Perception on Cross Dressing**

In line with the Nigerian or African cultural value system, cross dressing is passive by many as an unacceptable way of life. The Nigerians reaction towards cross-dressing in most parts of the country is negative and connotes a sense of disapproval (Farooq, 2020). In most cases, cross-dressers are sometimes viewed with contempt in Nigeria given the perception by some that cross-dressers are either gay, transgender or lesbians. According to Nwolu et al (2022), cross-dressing is compounded by the Same-Sex Marriage Prohibition Act in Nigerian which prescribes 14 years jail sentence for homosexuals. They emphasized that tolerance is increasingly noticeable in the Nigerian society given advancement in time and the growth of social media which serves to promote gay. Even with the negative attitude towards cross-dressing, the trend has taken a new dimension with male comedians who cross-dress majorly to entertain and mimic behaviour unique to the female gender. Some men have cross-dressed to escape from prison, avoid arrest, deceive security agencies or get undue benefits. For the above purpose, people perceived cross-dressing as a means to avoid punishments or get benefits.

## **Theoretical Framework**

### **Social Identity Theory**

This study adopts social identity theory as the framework of analysis. The theory was originally put forward by Peter Berger and Thomas Luckman in 1966. The central proposition of this theory is that a professional entertainment experts or model should have his or her social identity through which he or she could be identified. The theory focused on the adoption of unique social life by entertainers to achieve social identity and acceptance. Here, the models like comedians and content creators adopt an approach through which they could be identified, which will give them uniqueness in the industry. Instead of separating cognition from communication and predicting behavior based on patterns, social identity theorists propose that comedians should construct unique meanings as they interact with the audience to make them happy.

One of the strategies of doing that is through cross-dressing. This theory sees cross dressing as a means for entertainment and comic activities, and not for negativity like same sex issue. Here, cross-dressing is seen

as a social life meant to achieve unique identity, audience acceptance, preference, and market growth. This theory was used because the major reason for the adoption of cross-dressing strategy by the comedians and content creators is to achieve recognised entertainment identity, social differentiation, recognition and to acquire more audience preference in the entertainment industry.

### **Empirical Studies**

Aja-Ugwu (2019) focused on newspaper coverage of cross dressing among selected entertainers Lagos state Nigeria. The work used existing data through content analysis from selected national newspapers in Lagos State. Data were analyzed using mean and percentages. It was discovered that most of the newspapers do not cover cross dressing in their front page, but sometimes inside page. More so, most of the papers covered it mainly ones in a month and not daily or weekly.

Nwolu et al (2022) researched on women perception of cross-dressing among male comedians on Instagram. The objectives of the study is to ascertain the extent of female audience opinion of cross-dressed male Instagram comedians, determine how the comedy skits represent the female gender, find out factors that motivate cross-dressing among male comedians and ascertain how the female audience reacts to the representation of women by male-cross dressed comedians on Instagram. The study used the survey quantitative research method. It was anchored on technological determinism theory as propounded by McLuhan. The questionnaire was utilized to gather primary data while available literature served as the source of secondary data. The Taro Yamane technique was used to choose a sample size of 400 respondents from a population of 1,900,000. The researchers found that women do not appreciate male cross-dressed comedians, cross-dressed male comedians debase women by projecting them as dependent, unfaithful, gossips etc. Also, male comedians cross-dress because the female gender has diverse characteristics that could pass for rich comedy content and women are indifferent to their representation.

Bellos and Sanusi (2022) studied status conferral and agenda-setting romance of celebrity cross-dressers with the Nigerian media. The work used descriptive survey through questionnaire. The analysis was done using percentages. The powerful effects of the media suggest that the media, under the status conferral theory, has the power to confer status on things and persons due to increased or focused coverage on such persons which by the agenda-setting theory of the mass media, gives people what to think about and inadvertently confers celebrity status on such persons.

The gap in this work could be summarized on the subject, geographical location and objectives of the study. On the subject gap, none of the past studies covered the exact subject matter of this work. This means that adoption of cross-dressing by male comedians/male content creators has not been covered. More so, this study used Owerri, Imo as the focal point. None of the past researches used the same geographical location. In all, the objectives of this work as earlier stated in the introduction of this paper were not covered by past researches. For that, there is gap which this work has filled. This work focused on perception of Owerri residents towards the adoption of cross-dressing by male comedians/male content creators.

### **Methodology**

In this work, survey research design was used. The survey research method was adopted, by the researcher to deal with the characteristics of the chosen set of people whose opinions, behaviors and activities are essential for the collection of information, required for the study (Tayo-Garbson, Njoku & Etumnu, 2019).

The area of this study was Owerri, Imo State. The focus is the five communities in Owerri Municipal which include Umuororonjo, Amawom, Umuonyeche, Umuodu and Umuoyima. The communities are made up of farmers, traders, civil servants, academics and artisans. This is as a result of the cosmopolitan nature of Owerri Municipal.

The population of this study is made up of the entire Owerri municipal residents, which is 127,213 (**Source:** National Population Commission, 2006). The population was projected using the formula below.

$$Pp = Gp \times Pi \times T$$

$$127,213 \times 0.023 \times 15 = 43,888.483$$

Population increase from 2006 – 2021 is 43,888.

$$127,213 + 43,888 = 171,101$$

$$2021 \text{ population} = 171,101$$

Where

Pp = population projected

GP = given population (as at last census)

Pi = population growth index

T = time interval between the supplied population and the study year.

From the population, the researcher used Taro Yamane's formula for getting sample size.

$$n = \frac{N}{1 + N(e)^2}$$

Where

n = sample size

N = population

1 = constant

e<sup>2</sup> = error of significance

$$n = \frac{171,101}{1 + 171,101(e)^2}$$

$$n = \frac{171,101}{1 + 171,101(0.0025)}$$

$$n = \frac{171,101}{1 + 427}$$

$$n = \frac{171,101}{428}$$

$$= 399.76 = 400$$

The researcher adopted the multi-stage sampling technique for this study. This technique involves 3 stages viz:

**Stage one:** The researcher will first stratify the sample size into 5 areas that makes up the Owerri Municipal viz: Umuororonjo, Amawom, Umuonyeche, Umuodu and Umuoyima.

**Stage two:** In this stage, the instrument for data collection was divided amongst the strata areas of study in this format.

$$n = 400 = 80$$

S/N	Areas	Adm. Number
1	Umuororonjo	80
2	Amawom	80
3	Umuonyeche	80
4	Umuodu	80
5	Umuoyima	80
	<b>Total</b>	<b>400</b>

**Stage three:** Having statistically split these instruments among the 5 areas of study, the 400 copies of the questionnaire was randomly administered to respondents/sample in each of the areas respectively. All members of the community who are 18 years and above are eligible for the study.

The measuring instrument in this study is the questionnaire. The questionnaires in this study were formulated from the research questions. Out of the 400 copies of the distributed questionnaire, only 354 copies were returned and used. The 46 copies of the questionnaire were not returned at all.

For data analysis, the researchers utilized simple percentages and chi-square were used to test the hypotheses.

## Data Analysis and Results

### Data Presentation and Analysis

**Research question one:** What is the level of awareness of Owerri residents towards cross-dressing by male comedians/male content creators?

**Table 1:** The extent of awareness of Owerri residents towards cross-dressing by male comedians/male content creators.

Responses	Frequency	Percentage
high extent	205	57.90
Average extent	55	15.53
Low extent	94	26.55
<b>Total</b>	<b>354</b>	<b>100</b>

**Source:** field survey, 2023

Since 57.90 percent of the respondents show positive responses, it means most of the respondents said high extent which means that they are aware of cross-dressing by male comedians/male content creators.

**Research questions two:** What is the perception of Owerri residents on cross-dressing by male comedians/male content creators?

**Table 2:** The perception of Owerri residents on cross-dressing by male comedians/male content creators.

Response	Frequency	Percentage
positive	215	61
Neutral	103	29
Negative	36	10
<b>Total</b>		<b>100</b>

**Source:** field survey, 2023

The results above indicated that Owerri residents perceived cross-dressing by male comedians/male content creators as positive which means they see it as entertainment and not as same-sex issue.

**Research question three:** What are the major factors influencing male comedians/male content creators to adopt cross-dressing?

**Table 3:** Firm, unique recognition and social identity are the major factors influencing male comedians/male content creators to adopt cross-dressing.

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	196	55.36
Don't know	118	33.33
no	40	11.29
<b>Total</b>	<b>354</b>	<b>100</b>

**Source:** field survey, 2023

The results from the above table indicated that the major factors influencing male comedians /male content creators to adopt cross-dressing are firm, unique recognition and social identity.

### Testing the Research Hypotheses

The three research hypotheses formulated for this study were tested using chi-square method. If the relationship between the expected frequency and the observed frequency, within the same margin of error that give rise to the determination of the value of the chi-square goodness of fit. The comparison between the obtained or calculated value and table value determine whether a hypothesis can be rejected or accepted. It means that the table value becomes the decision point for the evaluation obtained value, greater than the table value shows an acceptance while any value lower than. It shows rejection in view of this, the study was able to determine the acceptability or otherwise of each of the formulated research hypothesis. It is the obtained result that was used in the discussion of findings.

**H<sub>01</sub>:** The level of awareness of Owerri residents towards cross-dressing by male comedians/ male content creators is not high.

**H<sub>11</sub>:** The level of awareness of Owerri residents towards cross-dressing by male comedians/ male content creators is high.

Item 1, in table one were used for the test of hypotheses one.

**Table 4:** Chi-square table for hypothesis one.

Options	O <sub>i</sub>	E <sub>i</sub>	O <sub>i</sub> – E <sub>i</sub>	(O <sub>i</sub> – E <sub>i</sub> ) <sup>2</sup>	$\frac{\sum(O_i - E_i)^2}{E_i}$
Yes	205	118	87	7569	64
No	55	118	-63	3969	33.63
Not sure	94	118	-24	576	4.88
<b>Total</b>	<b>354</b>				<b>11.26</b>

X = calculated chi-square value = 102.57

Degree of freedom = (c – 1) = (3 – 1) = 2

Margin of error = 0.5

$$X^2 = \text{table value} = 5.991$$

The result above shows that obtained chi-square value of 102.51 was greater than the  $X^2$  table of 5.991. It means that  $102.51 > 5.991$ . The findings therefore, indicate that the null hypothesis was rejected while alternate was accepted. It means that the level of awareness of Owerri residents towards cross-dressing by male comedians/male content creators is high.

**H<sub>02</sub>:** Owerri residents do not perceived cross-dressing by male comedians/male content creators as positive.

**H<sub>12</sub>:** Owerri residents perceived cross-dressing by male comedians/male content creators as positive.

Item 2, in table 2 were used for hypothesis two;

**Table 5:** Chi-square table for hypothesis two.

Options	O <sub>i</sub>	E <sub>i</sub>	O <sub>i</sub> – E <sub>i</sub>	(O <sub>i</sub> – E <sub>i</sub> ) <sup>2</sup>	$\frac{\sum(O_i - E_i)^2}{E_i}$
Yes	215	118	97	9409	79.73
No	103	118	-15	225	1.90
Not sure	36	118	-82	6724	56.98
<b>Total</b>	<b>354</b>				<b>138.61</b>

$$X^2 = \text{calculated chi-square value} = 138.61$$

$$\text{Degree of freedom} = (c - 1) = (3 - 1) = 2$$

$$\text{Margin of error} = 0.5$$

$$X^2 = \text{table value} = 5.991$$

The above result as obtained indicates that chi-square value of 138.61 is greater than  $X^2$  table value of 5.991. The findings therefore, show that null hypothesis was rejected whereas alternate was accepted it means that Owerri residents perceived cross-dressing by male comedians/male content creators as positive.

**H<sub>03</sub>:** Firm, unique recognition and social identity are not the major factors influencing male comedians/male content creators to adopt cross-dressing.

**H<sub>13</sub>:** Firm, unique recognition and social identity are the major factors influencing male comedians/male content creators to adopt cross-dressing.

Item 3 in table 3 were used for test of hypothesis three.

**Table 6:** Chi-square table for hypothesis three.

Options	O <sub>i</sub>	E <sub>i</sub>	O <sub>i</sub> – E <sub>i</sub>	(O <sub>i</sub> – E <sub>i</sub> ) <sup>2</sup>	$\frac{\sum(O_i - E_i)^2}{E_i}$
Yes	196	118	78	6084	51.55
No	118	118	0	0	0
Not sure	40	118	-78	6084	51.55
<b>Total</b>	<b>354</b>				<b>103.1</b>



$X^2 = \text{calculated chi-square value} = 103.1$

Degree of freedom =  $(c - 1)$

$= (3 - 1) = 2$

Margin of error = 0.5

$X^2 = \text{table value} = 5.991$

Therefore, since  $X^2$  calculated chi-square value of 103.1 is greater than  $X^2$  table value of 5.991, the researcher accepted alternate hypothesis while the null hypothesis was rejected. The finding therefore shows that firm, unique recognition and social identity are the major factors influencing male comedians/male content creators to adopt cross-dressing.

### **Discussion of Findings/Answer to Research Questions**

This study discovered that the level of awareness of Owerri residents towards cross-dressing by male comedians/male content creators is high. According to Ogunlowo (2017), the people recognized the existence of cross-dressing by male comedians and other people in the society. This means that the issue of cross dressing is not new to majority of the people.

This work discovered that Owerri residents perceived cross-dressing by male comedians/male content creators as positive. Based on that, it can be inferred that cross dressing is done for the reason of entertainment and not for same sex (Sood, 2018). This reason has made many people to like cross dressing for its comedy purposes.

The result here indicated that Firm, unique recognition and social identity are the major factors influencing male comedians/male content creators to adopt cross-dressing. According to Harry (2016), many comedians wants to achieve global recognition, social identity for their brand and that has motivated them to used cross dressing identity.

### **Conclusion**

The issue of cross dressing has come to stay among comedians and content creators. For its continued existence, the Owerri residents are fully aware of cross dressing, and they see it as a good entertainment strategy. The major reason for the existence and growth of cross dressing include firm, unique recognition and social identity. This study therefore conclude that cross dressing is a unique entertainment approach which many comedians and content creators have adopted to give uniqueness to their brand and achieve audience happiness and acceptance.

### **Recommendations**

Arising from the findings and conclusion, the study recommends that:

1. There is need for government agencies through social media content creators to use social media to educate people about cross dressing so that people who are seeing it as negative will understand that it's for only entertainment.
2. Comedians and content creators adopting cross dressing strategies should always carry out a social enlightenment programmes to educate the people that the strategy is just for entertainment so that people will not be seeing them as promoting same sex.
3. The government and media regulators should identify any comedian or content creator who is using cross dressing to promote same sex and bring such person to book.

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