# Celebrification and Blogosphere. A  Narrative of Social Media Portrayal of Celebrities

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**Abstract**
This study is on Nigerian audience perception of social media portrayal of celebrities using Funke Akindele as a case study. A concurrent mixed research methods were used to execute the work. Survey and textual analysis were used under these methods. Questionnaire was designed to obtain quantitative data from the survey and thematic code sheet was used to obtain data for textual analysis. The study population stood at 9,113,605 with 340 as sample size obtained through stratified sampling method for the survey and 50 articles were analyzed for the textual analysis, out of 135 articles posted on the blog from April 2009 to April 2017. Findings showed that the representation of celebrity on gossip blog affect the perception of Nigerian audience about them in this case, Funke Akindele. Again, the representation of Funke Akindele's persona on gossip blog was mostly positive and 58% of the audience perceive Funke Akindele in a positive light based on her portrayal on the media. 38.8% of the audience perception of Funke Akindele is influenced majorly by their religion amidst other factors when creating meaning to articles written about her on blogs. Also, there is a strong relationship between media portrayal of Funke Akindele and the perception of the Nigerian audience about her. From the findings of this research work and the review done, the researchers concluded that there is a significant positive relationship between social media portrayal of celebrities and audience perception and recommended that social media users (bloggers) should be objective in their posts about celebrities so that they would not mislead the audience on who a celebrity really is or is not and also suggested that, future researches should look at how celebrification is coded in Nigerian mainstream media.

**Keywords: Celebrification ● Social Media ● Funke Akindele ●Blogosphere ● Portrayal**

## INTRODUCTION

The media, a product of technological advancement on communication, can be described as a force that has not only come into existence for a life time but has come to stay for an indefinite period. It is a force that most people of all ages and walks of life have become accessible to, and become exposed to its content, thereby having a sense of attachment to it. This implies that media

platforms are carriers of information to the public at large and have become social influencers. The functions they perform – informing, educating, persuading and entertaining – are core components that appeal to the human society making media messages of great importance to the public.

The proliferation of media has aided the formation of the audience thought process and perception towards products, events and personalities portrayed on the media which eventually births a decision of the audience after being exposed to 'media-reality'. Media-reality can be understood as the scenery portrayed by the media with an intention to make the audience attribute authenticity and realness to media products.

Continuous use of the media and exposure to its generated programmes have an effect on the audience and as explained by Anderson et al (2003) "media use affects behaviour through priming cognitions and eliciting effect on a short term basis"; while a long term exposure to the media affects "beliefs, perceptions, behavioural scripts and affective traits, bringing about lasting changes in personality" ( Huesmann & Kirwil, 2007).

Changes incited by the media on its audience can be said to extend to the psychographics level of the audience as the mass media have a considerable level of influence and impact on the perception of audience exposed to its content while also holding some level of psychological power on its audience thinking process.

Although television is the pioneer media outlet to enjoy thorough research on its influence on the audience (which was majorly children as at that time) due to its powerful effect, which is strengthened by its audio-visual characteristics; the advent of the new media in this new age of technological advancement has opened doors of research to be conducted on the effect the messages disseminated on this platform has on its users.

New media Technology is a term describing the revolution that is and will continue to affect the information and communication technology, but in this century, new media refers to communication and information software that are internet based. They include Social networking sites such as acebook and Twitter, blogs, websites etc.

Blogs have become a common trend amidst media audience because of its ease of access both by the blogger and the audience. A blog started off as a web log (Online diary) but has now become a great source for news, even celebrity news. It allows for interaction between the sender and receiver of media messages making it easier for media audience to get addicted to media products.

The media is able to have effects on the audience because of the craze to get and consume more information from the media and the media has been driven by this craze to create more and more media platforms as assisted by the technology developers who have come up with blogs (gossip blogs, Political blogs, fashion blogs, general purpose blogs and so on), instant messaging, I-report corners and so on.

The insatiable need for media products and the appeal it has to the audience due to the variety of programmes on the media (including movies, music, news etc.) targeting various categories of the media audience make the mass media audience become 'media-cannibals'. This term explains the process of transformation of the media audience from the state of consuming media messages sparingly to consuming them as a whole and in surplus and in some cases, addictively.

The media-reality is then given the power to define what set of individuals would bask in the spotlight of the media. The media messages are able to blur, bend and blend the opinion making process of her audience. The perception of reality perceived by the audience is greatly affected by the media.

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Individuals that serve as highlights in the mass media reality are known as celebrities. "Celebrity" is an encompassing term defining a person widely recognized due to the degree of public and media attention the person commands and the persona they exhibit or represent.

Celebrification is a term used to describe the process of conferring a normal individual with the status of a celebrity due to an action exhibited by a person or the person's talent and the change from being just a public figure to being a celebrity, and the ability to affect and command a large number of the audience socially, culturally and so on. The media plays the role of conferring this status to an individual, person, place etc., through the frequency and direction of coverage, prominence and volume of story reported, and the coverage of stories about the celebrity's personal life which is totally outside what they are popularly known for.

Funke Akindele, who has been in the picture of the media over time is used as the case study for this work. She is an actress, producer, script-writer who started off with a sit com programme "I need to know". She has since then been visible in not just Yoruba movies but also English Nigerian movies and has even appeared in Ghanaian movies. She has been able to create a brand for herself as "Jenifa". Due to her skills and talent, her private life has become a commodity sold by the media to the public.

Therefore, the basis for this study is to examine the effect the media portrayal of Funke Akindelehas on the perception of Nigerian audience.

## Statement of the Problem

It has been argued that media-reality is the power that defines what set of individuals would bask in the spotlight of the media. The media messages are able to blur, bend and blend the opinion making process of the audience and the perception of reality of the audience is said to be greatly affected by the media. The audience members are believed to see even the media icon as larger than life, hence celebrities are constructed in the minds of the media audience. These celebrities exert certain influence on the audience based on media portrayal. They also tend to win support of the audience for what they stand for. However, some scholars argue that media messages are not sufficient to promote personalities beyond what individual audience members know about the celebrities. It is in the light of the contradictory view that this study is anchored as it seeks to find out audience perception of media portrayal of celebrities: a study of Funke Akindele.,

## Research Questions

i.    To what extent are Nigerian audience exposed to media reports on Funke Akindele?
ii.   How is Funke Akindele portrayed in the Nigerian media?
iii.  What is the perception of Nigerian audience about Funke Akindele based on how she is portrayed in the media?
iv.   What other factors apart from the media influence audience perception of Funke Akindele?

## Research Hypothesis

In respect of the above research questions, the following hypotheses were drafted to be tested:

$H_1$ – There is a significant relationship between media portrayal of celebrities and the perception of the Nigerian audience about these celebrities.

$H_0$ - There is no significant relationship between media portrayal of celebrities and the perception of the Nigerian audience about these celebrities.

## Literature Review

## Celebrity Culture

The presence of celebrity culture in this dispensation cannot be denied as Cashmore (2006) said that,"Like it or loathe it, celebrity culture is with us: it surrounds us and even invades us. It shapes our thought and conduct, style, and manner. It affects and is affected by not just hardcore fans but by entire populations".

In Merriam-Webster Dictionary, "Celebrity is the state of being famous or celebrated and a person who is famous". Oxford English Dictionary Online (2010) refer to celebrity as "a solemn rite or ceremony, a celebration" and "person of celebrity,a celebrated person: a public character". as explained by.Gabler (2007) also saw celebrity in form of an action relating to "human entertainment" as "a person who, by the very process of *living,* provides entertainment for us (The Audience)".From the above, 'celebrity' can be expressed as the naming of a particular phenomenon and as an action that is taking place.

Newbury (2000) perceives celebrity as a profession beyond the grasp of ordinary members of the society. He said "actors of a certain rank, performers who had reached the top rung of an insular profession".

In this contemporary age of media boom, celebrity is brought closer to the audience. Rojek (2001) named three types of celebrities which are**:** Ascribed celebrities, Achieved celebrities and Attributed celebrities**.** These classification explains how they came to become widely recognized by the public which consequently affect how they are perceived by the public:
Ascribed celebrities are those who become famous because of their descent and not because of something important that they might have done or a skill, talent that they have. This includes royalty, socialites, with a long background of affluent relative. Simply put, they are the children of famous parents who were also celebrities. Some examples of ascribed celebrities in the western world are Prince William and Prince Harry of the British royal family, Miley Cyrus etc. In Nigeria, Zahra Buhari, Omotola's daughter, Michelle Aigbe etc.
Achieved celebrities are those who became famous because of their talent and skill in their particular field. These are generally actors and actresses, musical artists, and sports stars. Often, achieved celebrities gain fame and recognition through receiving a well-known award. Achieved Celebrities are the main subject of research for this study. Some examples of achieved celebrities in the western world who are also globally recognized are Beyoncé (singer, actress), Jay Z (Rapper), Adele (Singer) etc. In Nigeria, FunkeAkindele (Actress), Tiwa Savage (singer), YemiAlade (Singer), Wizkid (Singer), Obafemi Martins (Footballer), Falz the Bahdguy (Rapper) etc.
Attributed celebrities are those who become famous not because of their lineage or a talent or skill they have but by attracting a lot of media attention or by being associated with multiple celebrities. He is a Celebrity "is a person who is well-known for his well-knownness," (Boorstin, 1962). Although, at the long run, an attributed celebrity may later exhibit a talent or skill but the fact is he/she did not come to limelight because of that reason.
These celebrities are most time famous for an infamous act like challenging societal values and being controversial in nature. Some examples of attributed celebrities are Kim Kardashian, Vanna White, and Nicole Richie. In Nigeria, Toke Makinwa, Bob Risky etc. In the same vein,

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there have been cases recorded where an ascribed celebrity later became identified as an achieved celebrity. These happens in instances where they are featured in movies or are identified as musicians or exhibit sportsmanship skills or any other skill that show them as been talented. Most times, they get business deals based on connection built by their parents over the years, but their continuous presence in the industry is determined by their talent and skills. For example, Willow Smith (singer) and Jaden Smith (Singer / Rapper/ Actor) - Children of Will Smith (Actor).

A celebrity is different from a famous person or a public official as justified by Babcox (2009), who defined as celebrity as an action in which she said "A Celebrity was not simply public recognition. It included an interest in aspects of a well-known person's life that bore no obvious relationship to something they had done". Epstein (2005) further mapped out the difference between a famous individual and a celebrity. He said "Fame, then, as I prefer to think of it, is based on true achievement; celebrity on broadcasting that achievement, or inventing something that, if not scrutinized too closely, might pass for achievement. Celebrity suggests ephemerality, while fame has a shot at reaching the happy shores of posterity."

Culture on the other hand is perceived by most scholars as relating to ethnic groups and people's way of life or as Epstein (2005) puts it, culture "stands in most people's minds for that whole congeries of institutions, relations, kinship patterns, linguistic forms, and the rest for which the early anthropologists meant it to stand." With further research and new understanding, the definition of culture became subject to improvement and culture now refers to any trend, technological advancement that penetrates into the perception, believes and behavior of people. Epstein (2005) opined that "In this newer context, culture also implies that the general atmosphere pervading any discrete aspect of life determines a great deal;thus, corporate culture is thought to breed self-protectiveness practiced at the Machiavellian level; the culture of poverty, hopelessness and despair; the culture of the intelligence community, viperishness; the culture of journalism, a short attention span; and so on."

**New Media and Celebrity Journalism**

Celebrity Journalism has taken a new turn in this present century as a result of the presence of an undeniable force, New Media Technology, a product of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) Sambe (2014). Marwick & boyd (2011) affirmed that celebrity culture has taken a new turn as a result of "networked media", consequently affecting the way people relate to celebrity images, how celebrities are produced, and how celebrity is practiced.

Ordinarily, New Media implies any form of media that is new i.e. just introduced. The implication of this is that when radio, television, newspaper, phone were introduced in the world and even in Nigeria, they could be referred to as 'new media (Auwal, 2015), but in this context of usage, new media refer to what Okwor (2005) cited in Auwal (2015) termed "digital interactive media".

Asemah (2011) described that new media as a term referring to "digital interactive media" was popularized in the twentieth century defining the "amalgamation of traditional media such as film, images, music, spoken and written words, with the interactive power of computer and communications technology, computer-enabled consumer devices and most importantly, the Internet". Bolter and Grusin (1999) explained this as a process remediation, where old media is re-

innovated to a newer and better version. For example, TV, a legacy medium is integrated with a computer to form a digital video recorder such as TiVo system (31.10) (Okwor, 2005).

Due to new media, information now takes the form of many-to-many against legacy media's one-to-many (Armelin, 2012). This implies that the process of waiting for legacy media to publish or broadcast celebrity stories has been removed. The audience are able to create, share their own celebrity stories and pictures through their mobile devices in split seconds when connected to the internet. (Hellmueller & Aeschbacher, 2010). Other online platforms like blogs, websites or web publishers have made it easier for audience to access celebrity stories (Willis, 2007). Even celebrities themselves give the audience what to talk about through their social media handles like facebook, twitter, instagram and so on. New media technology also known as online creations include "blogs, feeds, Google books, podcasts, vidcasts, online video (You Tube, blimps TV, etc), social network sites, search engines, affiliate programmes, online games, virtual trade shows, online communities, ebooks, kiosks, to mention a few" (Sponder, cited in Nwabueze, 2009).

Celebrification is impossible without the media, as Jerslev (2014) explained that "Celebrification should be regarded broadly as covering the continuous cross-media processes whereby the meaning of celebrity is negotiated and maintained through interactions between the media, their users and the celebrity in question".

**Celebrity Journalism and the Audience**

In the process of commodification and personalization of celebrities by the media, the interest and attention of the audience is important which is why the media adapted to the conditions of "Attention Economy"(Davenport & Beck, 2001). Attention economy as a principle describes the process of devising new strategies that would attract and grasp audience attention, which is what led to the regarding celebrities as "vehicles of attention" to increase the number of viewers and readers (Hellmueller & Aeschbacher, 2010). According to Redmond & Holmes (2007), for the media to continually benefit from the celebrity enterprise, the necessary "fuel" to achieve this means is the continuous consumption and reception of stories about celebrity by the audience.

To further grasp the importance of the audience to the making of a celebrity and sustaining celebrity status, Gabler (1994) described celebrities as "people who take the national stage, do their act and leave, invited to return only when they have something new to perform". This implies that without support from the public and an ability to intrigue the audience, a celebrity would not be a celebrity (Gregory, 2008).Wippersberg (2007) emphasizes a celebrity that remains a celebrity is dependent on the audience embracing and perceiving such individual or group of individuals as a celebrity. This mean that even if the media introduces a person as a potential celebrity, the person cannot become a celebrity without consent from the audience, that is, a celebrity without a fan base or interested audience is not a celebrity (Seifert, 2010).

Marshall (2006) cited in Hellmueller & Aeschbacher (2010) that the "accepted" Celebrity symbolizes the power the audience holds vis-à-vis the media industry which makes the media and celebrity depend solely on them for survival.

Maintaining the position of a celebrity is not child's play because it is not so easy to continually maintain the attention of audience as it is fickle in nature. Celebrities can be replaced

easily in the eye of the audience, because if the celebrity has nothing to offer, the public might lose interest in such an individual (Gregory, 2008). The media have therefore devised means to sustain the interest of the audience on celebrity stories: by reporting more on the notoriety of celebrities than their positive actions (Gregory, 2008). The description given to a particular celebrity which is termed media portrayal somewhat affects how audience perceive them which is because the media is influential in nature (Gregory, 2008). Palmer (2008), explains that the media conveys what and who the audience should think about and what to feel about the situations and light celebrities are presented in relation to societal norms of that time in the particular society and point of operation.

The perception of individuals about celebrities is molded by the media because of its large reach most especially in an age of new media technology where the media is at one's fingertips making it impossible to avoid contact with the media in this virtual world. As a result of this nature of the media, the media can make or mar a celebrity. As Boorstin (1983) stated that modern celebrity is marked by media manipulations that "hoodwinks the public". This indicates that media has an excessive amount of power to establish, maintain, and destroy celebrity status. "The media may choose to downplay certain celebrities or facts of their existence while choosing to sensationalize others" (Gregory, 2008).

**Funke Akindele: Life & Times.**
**Her Life**
Olufunke Ayotunde Akindele popularly known as Funke Akindele (Jenifa) was born on 24th of August, 1976 at Ikorodu, Lagos, Nigeria to a family of five where she is the second of three children (Two girls and a boy)  (Naij, 2011). Coming from a family where her father is a retired school principal and her mother, a medical doctor, education was a necessity for her (Wikipedia, 2017). She attended Ogun State Polytechnic, now Moshood Abiola Polytechnic where she obtained an Ordinary National Diploma (OND) in Mass Communication. Furthering her education, she got a Law degree from the University of Lagos, Akoka, Yaba and Masters in geology (Nigerian info box, 2016).

Funke Akindele can be described as an achieved celebrity as she is a known actress, producer and filmmaker. She rose into stardom after featuring in popular sitcom "I need to know" which ran from 1988-2002 and was sponsored by United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) (Nigerian info box, 2016).

Ever since, she has been featured in various Nollywood movies (Yoruba, Ibo, English) which include Final Whistle 1&2 (2000), Atlanta 1&2 (2004), Agbara Ife (2005), OjoIketala 1&2 (2005), Taiwo Taiwo 1&2 (2008), Jenifa (2008), Iro Funfun (2009), Maami (2011), Jenifa's Diary (2015 till 2017). She has even acted in Gollywood movies (Ghanian movie industry) which is a Trip to Jamaica (2016), (Wikipedia, 2017).

Funke Akindele has created a brand "Jenifa" which has become a house hold name through her comedy movie series (Jenifa's Diary). Due to this, her name is recognized home and abroad. She also has so many awards to her credit, some of which are Africa Movie Academy Award (2009) as Best Actress leading role in Jenifa, Zulu African Film Academy Awards (2012) as Best Actress in Maami and The return of Jenifa, Eloy Awards (2014) as Brand Ambassador of the Year Omo, Ghana Movies Awards (2016) as Best Actress Africa Collaboration in A Trip to Jamaica, Africa Entertainment Legend Awards (2016) as Best Actress of the Year in Jenifa's Diary, Africa Magic Viewers Choice Award (2016) as Best Actress in Comedy role in Jenifa's Diary and so on, to mention a few (Wikipedia, 2017).

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In her way of giving back to her supporters, fans and people generally, she set up a non-governmental organization known as THE JENIFA FOUNDATION with the sole aim of nurturing talents and acquiring vocational skills, just as it is a vision of her act 'Jenifa' in 'Jenifa's Diary to assist women to rely on their skills rather than prostitution (Wikipedia, 2017).

As regards her personal life, she was blissfully married to Alhaji Kehinde Almaroof Oloyede on May 26, 2012 (or so we thought) for a year as she divorced her husband on July 2013 on the ground of verbal abuse and other irreconcilable differences (Nigerian info box, 2016). She later remarried Nigerian singer Abdulrasheed Bello popularly called JJC Skillz on May, 2016 in London and they are married till date. She presently bears Funke Akindele Bello reflecting her marital status.

With many endorsement to her name, of which she was recently signed as an Ambassador of Irokotv, her Net Worth as at 2016 was put at N510 Millions.

## 2.2 EMPIRICAL REVIEW

Celebrity studies is a new and emerging area in Nigeria, hence, most studies conducted in this area are carried out by scholars in the western world.
Johansson (2015) carried out a research on *Celebrity culture and audiences: a Swedish case study.* The study examined how media consumers of different age, gender and socio-economic backgrounds in Stockholm relate to and talk about celebrities and celebrity media. Based on 16 small focus groups with 17 year olds and 45–55 year olds, with male and female participants from working-class as well as academic backgrounds, she investigated a range of responses to celebrity content in connection with overall media developments in Sweden, in order to gain insights into what the contemporary cultural emphasis on celebrity can mean on an audience level within a particular context. Some of the pleasures gained from celebrity content but also elements of celebrity 'hatred' and experiences of media manipulation are explored. Likewise, some of the articulations of individual celebrities and celebrity media are discussed as interlinked with socially determined identity positions such as age, gender and social class.

Jerslev (2014) in the study *Celebrification, Authenticity, Gossip: The Celebrity Humanitarian* discussed the celebrity humanitarian as media construction. Departing from a discussion of celebrification, the article argued that celebrities in public roles outside the field of entertainment are inevitably framed by and structured in accordance with celebrity logic. The article discussed how celebrity humanitarianism is a contested field, which, in order for a particular activity to support the celebrity persona, relies heavily on strategies of authentification. Finally, the article showed how information about a photograph of Angelina Jolie from her trip to the Democratic Republic of Congo in March 2013 is transformed and translated into gossip about the star's private life when discussed by users on a celebrity site.

Boon and Lomore (2001) explained in the research work *Admirer-celebrity relationships among young adults explaining perceptions of celebrity influence on identity* that investigated young adults' judgments regarding the degree to which relationshipswith celebrity idols influenced their sense of identity and feelings of self-worth. Participants (N = 75) were recruited from a larger sample (N = 213) of young adults whose responses to a brief survey instrument indicated that they were moderately to strongly attracted to media figures they identified as idols in their lives. The paper discussed the characteristics of the sample of idols participants reported as well as descriptive data concerning the degree to which participants perceived these idols as influential in shaping their sense of identity and feelings of self-worth.

In another study carried out by Omenugha, Uzuegbunam and Ndolo(2016) *Celebrity culture, media and the Nigerian youth: negotiating cultural identities in a globalised world,* it was examined in the context of Nigeria, whether celebrity culture is being appropriated by Nigerian youth through their vicarious experiences of the media. A further aim was to establish whether such appropriation has any influence on their social behaviours and attitudes. Drawing respondents from undergraduate students at two universities in Nigeria, and employing qualitative andquantitative methodologies, the study has found that indications are rife of Western celebrity culture being perpetuated by both mainstream and alternative media, and that this is fastcatching up with Nigerian youth's cultural experiences. However, they concluded that there appears to be an emerging and empowering hybridization of African and Western cultures, as Nigerian youth negotiate their cultural identities.

**Theoretical Frame Work**
**Audience reception theory**
This theory was propounded by Stuart Hall in 1980. Julie Martin (2007) defined this theory as the "Encoding-Decoding" means of communication where the media encodes a message to suit a particular context and the audience decode the message based on their own ideologies.

The theory describes the audience as being active rather than passive when taking in media texts, information and messages. This demonstrates that one message can be understood from several point of view (Martin, 2007).

Stuart Hall (1980) outlined three positions audience take to decode media messages, they are dominant or preferred position, oppositional and negotiated position.

Dominant or preferred position allows for little misunderstanding or miscommunication as the sender and receiver are classified under the same cultural biases, assumptions and rules, hence the way the sender package a message is the way the receiver would interpret the message (Martins, 2007).

Oppositional position describes when audience decode messages in the way of the encoder's intent, but disagree and create their own meaning from the message based on their beliefs. This happens when controversial themes are raised in the message and the encoder and decoder have different social values and cultural bias (Hall, 1980).

Negotiated Position explains the compromise of the audience in the process of decoding a media message. Here, audience understands the media message but accepts part of the media's view in addition to their own view (Martins, 2007).

Some factors that also determine the position audience take while decoding a message as highlighted by Stuart Hall (1980) include life experience, mood at the time of viewing, age, culture, beliefs, gender and so on.

In the case of this study, it implies that media, which act as the encoder of the message (about celebrity, in this case Funke Akindele), could portray Funke Akindele either positively or negatively, but because the audience are seen as active and not passive users, the perception they end up having about Funke Akindele is as a result of the interpretation they have attached to the message media reported about her, and then decide if they would position themselves as dominant, oppositional or negotiated audience.

## Celebrification Theory

Celebrification theory, with origin traced to as early as 19th century, has no particular initiator. The theory is attributed to a number of scholars which include Olivier Driessens, Graeme Turner, Anne Jerslev, Chris Rojek to mention a few (Marvick & Boyd, 2011).

Celebrification theory according to Graeme Turner (2004) defines the way a person is represented and discussed about by the public, the commodification process a person undergoes and an aspect relating to culture and is constantly reformulated and re-defined.

Anne Jerslev (2014) simply captured the theory as the transformation an individual undergoes moving from a state of ordinariness or from being an ordinary public figure or a star to being a celebrity. This transformation is actualized through the media.

The media, therefore makes a celebrity out of a star through consistency and nature of stories (either positive or negative) publicized about a person, in this case Funke Akindele.

## Research Methodology

For this study, a concurrent mixed method research design covering survey research method and textual analysis was adopted in order to generate quantitative and descriptive data.

In order to determine the opinions, attitudes and perception of the respondents' i.e. Nigerian audience about Celebrities media portrayal using Funke Akindele as a case study, survey research method would be used. Textual analysis on the other hand was used to validate and further analyse the perception of Nigerian audience as posted in direct response to stories on gossip blog about Funke Akindele.

Textual analysis is a research method that requires the researchers to critically analyze the content of communication rather than the structure of the content (Frey, Botan, Kreps, 1999). In this case, the communication to be textualized are the articles written on Linda Ikeji's blog about Funke Akindele.

Linda ikeji's blog, whose articles were textualized has an international of 23,721,829 and a national reach of 109,405 as at 29th June, 2017 (Similar web, 2017) with high level of credibility and believability attached to its stories by the audience. The blog is also known to cover stories and write articles about Celebrity, Funke Akindele, has platform created for comments, easy access to story archives. These features formed the reasons the researchers chose this blog.

### Population

According to the National Population Census that held in 2006, Lagos State has a population of 4,719,125 Males and 4,394,480 females accumulates to 9,113605. Due to the fact that human beings are not static, which implies that population is subject to changes due to birth rate and death rate, a more recent population census would be required. Therefore, for the population study, the researchers used population projection formula propounded by Owuamalam (2012) to project the population by 10 years. This moved the population to   12,029,959.

For the textual analysis, the population of the study were the number of articles written about Funke Akindele on Linda Ikeji's Blog from April 2009 to April 2017 and they are 135 articles.

**Sample size**

For the survey segment, in determining the sample size from the population of 12,029,959, Krejcie & Morgan table was used to arrive at a sample size of 384

For textual analysis, 50 articles written about Funke Akindele between April 2009 and April 2017 in Linda Ikeji's blogs archives form the sample size.

For survey, questionnaire was used as the instrument for data collection. The questionnaire was divided into two sections – section A and section B.

For Textual Analysis, a code sheet was used. The code sheet was thematic in order to interpret data from articles about Funke Akindele on the blog. The articles were measured under the following theme with codes: Career (1), Family Life (2), Social Life (3), Perception about her person (4), To determine the direction of the articles under these themes, the sub-themes Positive, Negative and Neutral were used except for the theme Perception about her person where sub-themes Arrogant, Middle Course and Friendly were used.

Career – The theme of career was used to analyse articles on Linda Ikeji's blog that portray Funke Akindele on the basis of her career as an actress, movie producer. The undertone could be positive, negative or neutral.

Family life –  Articles written on Linda Ikeji's blog about Funke akindele's relationship with her family, marriage, husband formed the basis for analysis under this theme. The undertone are positive, negative and neutral.

Social Life – Here, the articles about Funke Akindele on Linda Ikeji's blog were analysed based on her relation with fans, colleagues, business partners in events, parties, activities and so on. The undertone are positive, negative and neutral.

Perception about her person – Under this theme, articles were analysed based on the portrayal of Linda Ikeji's blog about the personality of Funke Akindele i.e. who she really is.

The undertone to the article could show her as friendly, arrogant or middle person.

**Sampling Technique**

Clustered random sampling method also known as multi-stage sampling method was used in this study. When working with a large and complex population this technique is most suitable. In order to select a sample, the population was broken down into clusters and separate groups at various stages. The researchers then selected samples at each stage from each cluster using probability or non-probability sampling method to give every cluster an equal chance of selection.

Lagos State has twenty (20) local government under three (3) constituency: Lagos East, Lagos West and Lagos Central. Using Multi-stage sampling technique, the stages were broken down below:

Stage 1 – Simple random sampling technique was used to choose a constituency in Lagos State to form the foundation of where the research instrument will be distributed. After drawing twice without replacement, Lagos East constituency / Senatorial District was chosen.

Stage 2 – Lagos East has five (5) local government areas which are Epe Local government, Ibeju, Ikorodu, Somolu and Kosofe Local government. Epe Local government was chosen using simple random sampling.

Stage 3 – Epe Local government has nineteen (19) wards which are Abomiti, Agbowa, Agbowa Ikosi, Ago Owu, Ajaganabe, Ejirin, Etita/Ebode, Ibonwon, Ilara, Ise/ Igbogun, Itoikin, Lagbade, Odomola, Odoragunsin, Oke-Balogun, Oriba/Ladaba, Orugbo, Poka and Popo-ob.Purposive sampling method was used to draw four wards to share the questionnaire due to accessibility to the researchers.

The wards where the research was conducted: Ejirin, Agbowa Ikosi, Ilara and Bashua Etita/Ebode.

For the textual analysis, nonprobability sampling method was used in which the first fifty articles as arranged in the archive of Linda Ikeji's blog were analysed.

The face validity method was used in testing the validity of the measuring instrument for both survey (questionnaire) and textual analysis (code sheet) because the categories are rigidly and satisfactorily defined and the procedure of the analysis was adequately conducted.

The questionnaire was used to collect data for the survey. The results were analysed with Statistical Product for Service Solutions (SPSS) and hypothesis was tested using Correlation table. For the textual analysis, data was analysed by reviewing articles posted on Linda Ikeji's blog which was then presented as a table.

**Discussions of Findings**

Here, data collated from the field would be explained, interpreted and discussed in line with the research questions, stated in chapter one, to be answered.

**Research Question One**

*Are Nigerian audience exposed to media reports on Funke Akindele?*
Item 8, 9, 10 and 13 of the questionnaire were used to answer this research question.

The analysis of respondents that look out for gossip stories about celebrities revealed that 18.2% respondents agree, 12.6% are undecided, 27.6% disagree while 28.2% strongly disagree. Also, analysis of respondents that visit blogs showed that 25.0% of respondents strongly agree that they visit blogs, 35.9% agree, 6.5% are undecided, 12.1% disagree, 20.6% strongly disagree.

Also, it was revealed that 25.0% (85) respondents visit Linda Ikeji blog, 6.8% (23) visit Bella naija blog, 29.1% (99) visit other blogs, 39.1% (133) do not visit any blog. It is also seen that respondents that strongly agree to visiting blogs because of Funke Akindele are 9.1% (31), 10.6% (36)agree, 14.1% (48) are undecided, 31.2%(106) disagree while 35.0% (119) strongly disagree. This implies that that majority of respondents do not visit blogs majorly because of Funke Akindele but visit blogs for other reasons.

**Research Question Two**

*How is Funke Akindele portrayed in the Nigerian media?*
In the questionnaire, items 12, 14 and 15 give response to this research question. Also, The textual analysis of 50 articles about Funke Akindele on Linda Ikeji's blog between April 2009 - April 2017 was used to answer this question.

Information gathered show that 60 (17.6%) respondents strongly agree that blogs present negative information on celebrities more than positive information. 74 (21.8%) agree, 66 (19.4%) are undecided, 69 (20.3%) disagree and 71 (20.9%) strongly disagree. An analysis of the statement that Funke Akindele's media portrayal is welcoming revealed that 23.8% (81) strongly agree, 37.1% (126) agree, 19.7% (67) are undecided, 7.9% (27) disagree and 11.5% (39) strongly disagree.

The findings also show that 23.5% (80) Strongly agree that Funke Akindele's portrayal is more positive than negative. 36.8% (125) agree, 22.1% (75) are Undecided, 9.1% (31) disagree, 8.5% (29) strongly disagree. This means that majority of the respondents perceive Funke Akindele's portrayal to be positive than it is negative.

For the textual analysis, data elicited were categorized under career with 23 articles as positive, 5 neutral, 1 negative; Family life of which 8 were positive, 1 was Neutral, 6 Negative. For Social Life, 19 were positive, 2 Neutral and 1 negative. On Perception about her person, 5 portrayed her as friendly while no article portrayed as arrogant or middle person. The data show that the articles under the themes were majorly positive. This is in line with audience perception of Funke Akindele's media portrayal as positive than negative.

This is in line with what Gabler (2007) explained that celebrity culture in this new age involves glamourizing the life of achieved celebrities.

**Research Question Three**

*What is the perception of Nigerian audience about Funke Akindele based on how she is portrayed in the media?*
Items 11, and 16 of the questionnaire answer the research question above.

In question 11, it required finding out if blogs help respondents construct new image for celebrities. Analysis show that 43 (12.6%) respondents strongly agree that blogs help them them construct new image fr celebrities, 104 (30.6%) agree, 53 (15.6%) are undecided, 65 (19.1%) disagree and 75 (22.1%) strongly disagree. This means that majority of respondents agree that their perception about celebrities is influenced by media report about them.

Information in question 16 sought to find out if respondents love Funke Akindele due to her portrayal in the media. Analysis revealed that 25.9% (88) of respondents love Funke Akindele due to her portrayal in the media. 32.1% (109) agree,18.8% (64) are undecided, 12.4% (42) disagree and 10.9% (37) strongly disagree. This means that majority of respondents agree that the fact that they like Funke Akindele is due to media reports about her.

This is in agreement with the conclusion of Petersen, 2011 that Celebrity Gossip and other forms of entertainment news disseminated through blogs remain crucial components in the way that star images are produced and consumed. Through repetition, gossip blogs contributes to the visibility of stars and celebrities.

**Research Question Four**

*What other factors apart from the media influence audience perception of Funke Akindele?*
The items 17, 18, 19, 20, 21 and 22 on the questionnaire answer Research question four.

In question 17, the researcher sought to know if religion of respondents influence their total perception about Funke Akindele as portrayed on blogs. The findings explained that 14.4 % (49) strongly agree, 24.4% (83) agree, 22.1% (75) are undecided, 20.0% ( 68) disagree and 19.1% (65) strongly disagree. This implies that majority agree that their religion influence them.

Question 18 researched on whether age has an influence on their total perception of responedents about Funke Akindele as portrayed on blogs or not. 55 (16.2%) respondents strongly agree that, 66 (19.4%) agree, 66 (19.4%) are undecided, 87 (25.6%) disagree and 66 (19.4%) strongly disagree.  This means that majority of respondents disagree that their age influence them.

In Question 19, it sought to determine if gender has an influence on their total perception about Funke Akindele as portrayed on blogs, or not. Findings explain that 47 (14.8%) respondents strongly agree, 86 (25.3%) agree, 60 (17.6%) are undecided, 90 (26.5%) disagree and 57 (16.8%) strongly disagree.  This means that majority of respondents disagree that their gender influence them.

Item 20 on the questionnaire questioned if the beliefs and values of the respondents have an influence on their total perception about Funke Akindele as portrayed on blogs. Analysis show that 70 (20.6%) respondents strongly agree, 75 (22.1%) agree, 59 (17.4%) are undecided, 80 (23.5%) disagree and 56 (16.5%) strongly disagree.  This means that majority of respondents disagree that their their beliefs and values influence them.

Question 21 sought to know if the respondents are fans of  Funke Akindele based on her career as an actress as portrayed on blogs. The analysis showed that  110 (32.4%) respondents strongly agree, 108 (31.8%) agree, 45 (13.2%) are undecided, 45 (13.2%) disagree and 32 (9.4%) strongly disagree.  This shows that majority of respondents agree that they are fans of Funke Akindele based on career as an actress.

In question 22, data to determine if respondents are fans of Funke Akindele's lifestyle as portrayed on blogs was analysed. 104 (30.6%) respondents strongly agree, 83 (24.4%) agree, 51 (15.0%) are undecided, 64 (18.8%) disagree and 38 (11.2%) strongly disagree, implying that majority of the respondents are fans of Funke Akindele's lifestyle as portrayed on blogs.

This is in line with the statement made by Gregory (2008) that the description given to a particular celebrity which is termed media portrayal somewhat affects how audience perceive them which is because the media is influential in nature.

## Findings

For the textual analysis, a number of 50 out of 135 articles were analysed. From the empirical and descriptive data collected and analysed, the following findings were reached:

1. Celebrity story is a product of the media that attracts a large number of audience, both young and old.
2. The media portrayal of celebrities is a product of actions, inactions (both relevant and irrelevant) of celebrities.

3. Gossip blogs form a very good source for update on celebrity stories.
4. The audience visit blogs to get updated on celebrity stories.
5. The audience do not visit blogs specifically because of Funke Akindele.
6. The representation of celebrity on gossip blog affect the perception of Nigerian audience about them, in this case, Funke Akindele.
7. The representation of Funke Akindele's persona on gossip blog was mostly positive.
8. 58% of the audience perceive funke Akindele in a positive light based on her portrayal on the media i.e how she is portrayed.
9. 38.8% of the audience perception of Funke Akindele is influenced majorly by their religion amidst other factors when creating meaning to articles written about her on blogs.
10. From testing the hypothesis, it was revealed that there is a strong relationship between media portrayal of Funke Akindele and the perception of the Nigerian audience about her.

## Conclusion

From the findings of the research work and the review done in chapter two, the following conclusions were reached:

1. The audience are still strongly influenced by media reports on celebrity as it shapes their perception, view, knowledge about them which consequently influences if the celebrity would be liked or not by the audience
2. Even with the influence the media has on the audience, they are still influenced by the ideologies in the society. In Nigeria, for instance, which is a religiously sentimental, their religion influences how they judge and perceive stories written about celebrities

## Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, the researchers recommends the following:

1. The media should enable to be objective in their reports about celebrities so as not to mislead the audience on who a celebrity really is or is not.
2. The audience should become more active and less passive in the process of communication, so that they would not be gullible and easily mislead by what the media portrays.
3. The celebrities in the entertainment industry should perform the function of entertaining the audience whilst being socially responsible.
4. Future research in this area should determine the differences between the practice of celebrification by the Western media and the Nigerian media.

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