



Digital performances and sexual objectification: Rethinking Mr. Macaroni's concept of entertainment

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Abstract

Digital performances have been remarkably influenced by the convergence of arts and technology which has recorded very significant breakthrough in the world of entertainment. Performances have grown beyond traditional spaces on account of the instrumentality of the electronic and interactive nature of social media, curtsey of the ever improving and innovating wonders of the electronic and digital revolution. The emerging concern of this study revolves around the degree of sexual objectification in Nigerian digital performances; interrogating how digital performances reference women within set roles, objectify them and offer objectified generalised opinions. This study leans on feminists' criticism and digital media theories to present a nuanced study of selected Mr. Macaroni's performances. The study adopts qualitative content analysis to examine the selected performances. The findings of this study reveal that digital performances employ humour as a platform for conveying objectification. Interlaced beneath the entertaining frontals of these humour filled performances are deep rooted objectifying statements. A thorough analysis of these productions resolve that each fit very snugly into the Marxist approach to capitalism which is seen as a system of dominance and oppression and in this case, focused on women. The performances could be described as digitally infused capsules of objectifying aesthetics, with turgid reflexivity and selfish deconstructionist panorama.

Keywords: Digital performance, Entertainment, Feminism, Marxism, Objectification

1. Introduction

The field of performance has grown beyond the traditional space; this could be linked to the giving of technology. However, this embrace of technological inputs does not quash historical practices, instead, contemporary practices are positioned to interface with digital technologies. In proposing for the emergence of digital arts, McLuhan (2004: 158) posits: "A new media never complements an existing one or leaves it alone; instead, it always oppresses the latter until it finds new roles and forms for them". Just as the invention of television brought entertainment into the living room, digital performances make it possible for people to access performances at anytime and anywhere, with the aid of internet connections. Simply, digital performances involve the use of computer-based technologies in the creation, documentation, presentation, and dissemination of performances. In defining digital performance, Ekpe and Eze (2021: 2) lean on Dixon's description which positions Digital Performance as:

Any performance piece in which computer technology is central to the ideas, styles, methods, or modes of delivery, as opposed to being ancillary. These comprise live theatre, dance, and performance art that combines virtual reality and robotic performances; digitally generated or altered projections; computer-activated/sensing equipment-based installations and theatrical works; and computer-based performative activities and works, such as MUDS, cybertheatre events, MOOs, virtual worlds, CD-ROMs, computer games, and performative net.art works.

Theorized as a type of virtual performance of the self, internet-enabled communication implies that digital performance is pervasive and encompasses various presentational and communicational facets of electronic daily life. Beyond the concern for change in space experience, lies the contents promoted. Going by the words of Oscar Wilde, "the best artistic medium is theatre, which allows people to communicate their understanding of what it means to be human most directly" (Brockett & Ball, 2011: 5). This expression places a lot of expectation on the contents of performance packages as they emphasise the need to uphold what defines us all as humans. Consequently, this study inquires if the act of objectifying

females in performances is a way of portraying a what it is to be considered human. It recognizes that digital performance is concerned with how arts has been converging with the internet to create performances thus affording utilizers the platform to build network of interactivity and accessibility which is facilitated by the feedback mechanism such platforms offer.

Digital performance is an umbrella term that incorporates many forms of live or mediated theatre which include: "computer theatre and virtual reality theatre, both of which involve specific types of live performers, computer media, story/words and limited level of interactivity" (Allen, 1999: 239). Despite the positive features, the overarching theme of digital performance is the portrayal of women. Even as it appears to be educational, entertaining, and readily available, there seems to be a clear gender bias in the performances since they occasionally objectify women and make generalized judgments about them. The objectification of women's bodies in virtual performances upholds a society that subtly exploits women's sexuality and reflects a norm. Put differently, the female form is showcased as a trophy that artists can utilize to elevate themselves. The growth of social media and the organization of online performance activities present a variety of issues related to how people perceive the contents raised by these kinds of posts. The researchers are particularly concerned about why, in contrast to problems like fake news, the concept of female objectification in digital performances has not received the necessary attention. Campaigns and symposiums in Nigeria have focused on a few issues brought on by the country's heavy reliance on social media content (including fake news). However, no campaign or symposium has yet to address the objectification of women in Nigerian digital performances.

Amongst other things, this study poses arguments that exploit and also challenge the dominant form of Nigerian digital performances that present women in non-dignified manners. This is viewed from the standpoint of objectification theory which according to Ekpe (2018: 118) "offers a crucial framework for comprehending, investigating, and taking action to enhance the lives of women in a sociocultural environment that sexually objectifies and correlates a woman's value with her physical attributes and sexual functions". The performances shall be examined within specific social and cultural contexts rather than undifferentiated, global phenomenon.

2. Nigeria and digital space

Performances in Nigeria have had a good share of influenced from the operations of the virtual space, particularly due to the interactive, and widespread options offered. The changes are occurring rapidly and subtly; indications for these rapid changes could be linked to the accelerating number of internet users in Nigeria. According to *The Statistics Portal* (2023):

With 122.5 million users, Nigeria leads the list of African nations with the most internet users. Egypt and South Africa, with 80.75 million and 43.48 million users, respectively, come in second and third place. By 2025, it is anticipated that this perspective will have 152.28 million users. Nigeria has had a steady increase in the percentage of its population using the internet, with usage rising from 23.7% in 2015 to 27.7% in 2016, and then 32.2%, 36.9%, 41.8%, and 46.6% between 2015 and 2020. In 2023, the percentage increased to 55.4%, and by 2025, it is predicted to reach 65.3%.

According to a related report on Nigeria's high internet user population, "Nigeria ranks first in Africa and seventh in the world for countries with the highest number of internet users" (DigitXplus, 2023: 9). This demonstrates that the people of Nigeria view the virtual space as a goal. Furthermore, there are records from earlier years of massive operators (of the virtual world) visiting and implementing business plans to support and promote the expansion of internet usage in Nigeria. One of these notable visits was that of Mark Zuckerberg, the CEO and founder of the social media platform Facebook. According to *THISDAY* (2018), Mark's August 30, 2016, visit was his first time to Africa. Interestingly, earlier in 2016, *Facebook* announced Nigerians population on Facebook to be 16 million, upon Mark's visit to Nigeria in August 2016, Mark mentioned that the record has increased to 18 million and "Nigeria is Facebook's biggest African market."

In 2018, "Facebook deepened investment and commitment in Nigeria by unveiling the NG_Hub in Lagos, Nigeria on May 22" (*The Guardian*). In Africa, it was the company's first flagship community hub. Reporting on similar growth statistics about internet usage in Nigeria and expanding growth chances for virtual space consumers, *Channels Television* (2018) adds that "Tech giant, Google, launched its free Wi-Fi service for Nigerians, the Google Station, in Ikeja, Lekki, and other parts of Lagos". Juliet Ehimuan-Chiazor, the Country Director of Google Nigeria, was quoted by Channels Television as stating that the goal of the initiatives is to enable more Africans and Nigerians to take advantage of the opportunities the internet presents. Additionally, the free Wi-Fi service will be introduced in 200 places throughout five Nigerian cities. In addition, *Google* supports Nigerian Digital Performances through sponsorship deals such as *Google's* sponsorship of Bright Okpocha's *My Flatmates* as at 2018; the programme runs on Digital Satellite Television (DSTV) and is available online via YouTube.

Giannetti (1996: 408) believes that "every country has a distinct way of viewing the world and a set of values that are representative of that country's culture". The same can be said of their arts products". The social culture that characterises a given population encompasses the traditions, institutions, myths and beliefs found there in and such could be derived from the arts products of such population. Putting it differently, the creative contents of a defined culture say a lot about the social culture of the place concerned. As expressed by Giannetti (1996: 407-8) in the book *Understanding Movies*:

Japanese films typically emphasize conservative ideologies, such as the primacy of the family unit, social conformity, patriarchy, and the wisdom of consensus. This is similar to how Japanese society is generally perceived. American movies generally support the individual against society; they romanticize rebels, underdogs, mavericks, and outlaws, particularly in action, western, and gangster genres that emphasize extremes of violence and individuality. British films are typically quite literary,

emphasizing fluent dialogue, well-written scripts, sophisticated acting, and elaborate sets and costumes. In a similar vein, austere Lutheranism dominates Swedish films.

Drawing from Giannetti's inference, what then can be said about Nigerian digital performances which forms part of Nigerian cinema? What then could be defined as the cultural values promoted? Is there a clear-cut focus to what defines Nigerian arts products? In a seeming response, Ekpe and Akpabio (2021: 75) describe the Nigerian filmic space thus:

A world that offers array of magic, imagination and creativity. It could be the heaven of inspired storytelling, beauty, flight of fancy, emotions and morality; furthermore, it could be the depth values, wisdom and knowledge... the best in us, while also being the hell of gore, violence, sexual depravity and mental and emotional grossness; in other words, the beast in us.

But, contrary to this portrayal Nigeria has an enriched social culture which if defined in our performance contents could enhance our image as a country. This is a further emphasis on the need to investigate the contents of our digital theatrical performances.

This essay makes use of the assumptions of technological determinism, which postulates that the advancement of a society's technology dictates the evolution of its social structure and cultural values. In this case, women's objectification in the media both reflects and encourages the placement of women in the culture in question. A society's developmental imperatives may be impacted by how women are treated and portrayed in the media. This is consistent with Karl Marx's observation that social relations and organizational structure are impacted by technological advancements, and that cultural practices and social interactions are inextricably linked to the technological and economic foundation of a community. Marx and Engels contend that "class hierarchy and the material world change as a result of new production forces like technology emerging in society" (Norbert Eze, 2014: 70). Still in line with Marx's perception; Smith and Marx (1994: 70) see technology as "the basis for all human activities... a key governing force in society".

3. Conceptualising sexual objectification

Man is a generic being who works on the world of objects. He genuinely believes that he is capable of being a part of something that is greater than himself. Kamenka (1979:77) thus appropriates the object of labour as "the objectification of the human generic existence, insofar as man replicates himself practically as well as intellectually and in consciousness, and consequently recognizes himself in a world he has created". This suggests that, in addition to tearing apart the products of man's labour, labour also rips apart man's actual and collective life, including his objectification as a species. This leads Kamenka (1979: 77) to conclude that such "converts the advantage that man enjoys over animals into the disadvantage that nature has imposed upon his inorganic body". Contrarily, Socialist ideologies, which support the democratic society championed by Karl Marx and assume that there is no place for the "Other," advocate for the integration of all people and reject the idea that any category of people should be viewed as an object.

Many theories claim that humans are defined as male and female, only in relation to themselves. This makes the woman not considered an autonomous being and seems to be the notion behind Jules Michelet describing woman as "the relative being" (Beauvoir, 2011: 663). In a conceding view, Monsieur Benda writes: "A man's body has meaning by itself, disregarding the body of the woman, whereas the woman's body seems devoid of meaning without reference to the male. Man thinks himself without woman. Woman does not think herself without man" (Beauvoir 2011: 26). Benda's statement implies that a woman is only what a man considers her to be. Beauvoir (2011: 26) takes this from the point of otherness, stating that:

She is therefore referred to as 'the sex,' denoting that the man perceives her as fundamentally sexed; as she is sex to him, she is sex in its purest form. She is the inessential in front of the essential; she is definite and differentiable in respect to man, but he is not in connection to her. He is the Absolute; he is the Subject. The Other is her.

The fall out of Benda and Beauvoir points is that man sees his body as normal and direct, while he sees the woman's as an obstacle that he might be burdened by all that details it. This is a stance that Benda asserts is based on the lack of qualities. In this vein, Beauvoir (2011: 25) quotes Aristotle as saying, "it is appropriate to consider women to be inherently flawed". She adds the decree of Saint Thomas which describes the woman as "an incomplete man; an incidental being" (Beauvoir, 2011: 25).

It is in individuals' nature to try to justify their existence through experiences that are designed to prove how integral they are to their bodies. But what they fail to realize is that their identity is contested by the demands of their bodies and society. The woman's identity then becomes in conflict with the demands of the subjects. This seems to have laid the foundation for Beauvoir's (2011: 80) warning that "sexuality is but one facet of the existent's larger desire for existence; it cannot be viewed as an unchangeable given". The researcher proposes a situation where the problem of feminine destiny is posed differently, where:

The woman's behaviour will have a degree of freedom and she will be placed in a world of ideals. She is not the object of conflicting desires, and she must decide between the validation of her transcendence and her estrangement as an object. She comes up with answers that are ranked ethically (Beauvoir, 2011: 84)

When a woman is sexually objectified, it is said that she is a being who is looking for meaning in a world that already has values; in this society, understanding the social and economic structures is essential, and she should be examined from an existential perspective while taking into consideration her whole circumstances. Interiorizing the perspective of historical

materialism, it could be said that humankind is a historical reality that is not an animal species; rather it could be described as a historical reality that appropriates nature rather than submitting to it passively.

4. Deconstructing the different accounts of sexual objectification

The idea of female objectification and struggle for liberation presupposes the material purview for which the female image is constructed. Martha Gimenez (2005: 13) relates sexual objectification to what is obtainable with Marxist feminism, hinging on the belief that:

Marx's writings may be valuable for researching political economy, the state, ideology, social class, and other elements of capitalist societies, but they don't really help feminism much beyond raising awareness of the ways that capitalism, along with patriarchy and other male-dominated systems, contributes to the oppression of women.

Nussbaum rather sees Marx ideas from a different angle as she relates Marx's account of workers (under capitalism) being treated in an object like manner. Nussbaum establishes Marx's point with the different types of sexual objectifications which involve denial of autonomy; instrumentality; denial of subjectivity; inertness; violability; fungibility and ownership. Relating these with Marx's standpoint on the objectified method of labour treatment in a capitalist economy, Marx is observed to assume that labourers are not entirely viewed as tools or treated like animals, but rather are given human treatment to some extent. According to Marx, labourers are regarded as interchangeable, sometimes being treated similarly to machines and other workers with similar physical attributes. Since their value to the capitalist producer lies precisely on their activities, they are not, nevertheless, being treated as stationary.

With all the flaws Marx finds in Capitalism, Marx does not assume that workers are treated as physically violable, but somewhat suggests that workers' physical safety seems to be protected in theory, and not in the whole sense, and living in subpar conditions can gradually erode one's health, which can be viewed as a slow violation of one's body. Marx, however, suggests a spiritual breach, considered as occurring when workers lose control over their primary means of defining themselves as human beings. Relating with Marx's standpoint, Martha Nussbaum (1995: 263) submits that "although workers are not legally considered owners and are morally distinct from slaves, there is a deep-seated ownership link between the two parties in that the majority of what is taken from the worker is what is primarily his own—that is, the results of his labour".

Nussbaum's comment points to the uncertainty as to whether Marx underestimates the variance between the worker's situation and that of the slave. Because contracts containing some kind of consent are typically in place for workers, whereas slaves do not have any kind of consent in place. This propensity to erase differences between various types of sexual relationships is directly related to Catharine MacKinnon and Andrea Dworkin's tendency to parallel relationships that may be different in some subtle aspect even as MacKinnon (1989: 48) notes: "what sexuality is to feminism is what work is to Marxism: in each instance, the theory perceives as having been taken away something that is most uniquely one's own". MacKinnon understands Marx to mean that workers put their selfhood into their work produce and relationships and by result become embodied in such. This leads to the reading of Marx's theory as a variation of Diotima's theory, which is articulated in Plato's Symposium as the idea that people want to make things that will help them maintain their identities.

There are varying accounts of what objectification entails, such accounts include those of Immanuel Kant, Rae Langton, Catharine MacKinnon, Andrea Dworkin, Sally Haslanger and Martha Nussbaum. It is argued that Immanuel Kant's ideas on sexual objectification finds application in the works of Catharine MacKinnon, Rae Langton, Andrea Dworkin, and Martha Nussbaum. The notion of Kant's objectification is summarised in Kant's book *Lectures on Ethics*. Quite striking is the passage that reads:

Our tendencies can include one that is toward other people. Its objects of delight are not their work or services, but rather them. It is true that man has no want to enjoy another person's flesh, with the possible exception of wartime retaliation, in which case it is scarcely a desire; but there is an inclination that we might refer to as an appetite for savoring another human being. Sexual impulse is what we mean (Kant, 1963: 162–163)

In above excerpt, Kant implies that sexual desire serves as a yearning for enjoying another human being and views the objectified as an object positioned for man's enjoyment; this particularly not because of her work or services. It summarizes how human beings are defined as objects for their lovers' satisfaction when sexual desire is formed and directed towards them. Therefore, according to Kant, sexual objectification is the act of reducing a person to the status of a simple sexual instrument or an object intended for use. Kant (1963: 156) explains that sexual objectification takes place when a person is considered "something that piques one's interest. The individual is discarded as soon as they are possessed and their hunger is satisfied, much as how one discards a lemon after extracting its juice". In Kant's context therefore, a person's humanity is lost when they are sexually objectified; they no longer possess dignity or intrinsic worth, only relative or instrumental worth.

Rae Langton is of the opinion that sexual objectification has both moral and epistemic dimension. Implying that the act of objectifying another is both a moral and epistemic error. Langton establishes a connect between sexual objectification and pornography, arguing that the objectification of women in pornography entails both the moral and epistemic dimension. Langton draws greatly from Kant's account of objectification, incorporating feminist insights that explore how women are objectified. Langton argues that commodification ought to count as objectification, but not when objectification is identified in the context of sexuality.

On the flip side, is Dworkin and MacKinnon descriptions of sexual objectification which are strikingly similar. Both concur with Kant that sexual objectification is the process of considering an individual as merely a tool for the benefit of another, dehumanizing the subject to the level of an interchangeable object. Specifically, adopting Kantian terms, Dworkin (2000: 30) maintains that sexual objectification transpires when “an individual is reduced to an item or commodity and either purchased or sold” and implies that a person is depersonalized when they are sexually objectified; individuals who can be exploited as if they are not entirely human are no longer totally human in terms of society; this diminishes their humanity, which hurts them. With an overview from Kantian stance, MacKinnon (1989) provides a summary of the Kantian viewpoint, explaining that a person is a free and rational actor whose existence is an end in itself, as opposed to instrumental, and that a sex object could be explained based on its appearance and its usefulness for sexual pleasure. Unfortunately, women only exist for the enjoyment of men in pornography. Additionally, MacKinnon infers that men's consumption of pornography has reduced women to the status of cups and impliedly evaluated them according to how well they serve men. According to Dworkin, Kant, and MacKinnon, sexual objectification is when someone views another person as an object—a basic sexual tool—in a way that reduces the other person to the position of a tool. Therefore, according to each of these philosophers, sexual objectification seriously undermines a person's humanity.

Sally Haslanger's view on sexual objectification seems to be strongly influenced by MacKinnon's stance on the subject matter. Haslanger restructures Mackinnon's view on sexual objectification with some addition and argues:

When something (or someone) is objectified, it is viewed and treated as an object for the satisfaction of one's desire; however, this is not all; sexual objectification is assumed to be a relation of domination where one also has the power to enforce one's view. Objectification is not limited to the head; it is actualized, embodied, and imposed upon the objects of one's desire. Therefore, when something is objectified, one not only views it as something that would satisfy one's desire, but also has the ability to make it have the qualities desired. A skilled objectifier will, when the need arises, that is, when the object lacks the desired properties, exercise his power to make the object possess the desired qualities. (Haslanger, 2012: 64-65).

A socially constructed paradigm of gender that views men as the objectifiers and women as the objectified is implicit in Haslanger's narrative. It seems that Haslanger is implying that sexual objectification is not just something that is seen, but also that using another person as a tool is part of the process. It also depends on a mindset supported by the ability to enforce one's will. Haslanger concurs with Mackinnon that what makes objectification sexual is that it entails giving in to men's sexual desires and that it is eroticized—that is, that the idea that women should submit to men's desires is perceived as something romantic about women by both men and women. This explains Haslanger's position that sexual objectification is epistemically and morally harmful as it involves the false believe that “the objectified possesses qualities that make it desirable in the ways that one wishes and that allow it to fulfil those wishes” (Haslanger, 2012: 66). Summarily, Haslanger and MacKinnon opine that sexual objectification entails both viewing and using another person as mere means to an end as well as an attitude that is backed by the power to enforce.

Interestingly, Nussbaum and Langton seem to share similar opinions on what entails sexual objectification. Nussbaum identifies the features of inertness; instrumentality; fungibility; denial of autonomy; violability; denial of subjectivity; ownership as what defines the presence of sexual objectification. Building on Nussbaum's theoretical views, Langton expands Nussbaum's points, by adding the following features: reduction to body; reduction to appearance; silencing. This flow in ideas shared by Nussbaum and Langton accounts for the Nussbaum/Langton conjoined version of sexual objectification identified by Kathleen Stock. It is important to point out that the Nussbaum-Langton account considers sexual objectification as being entwined to gender roles; particularly because Nussbaum drew an example of a man objectifying another man. Additionally, the Nussbaum and Langton view contend that sexual objectification “isn't necessarily harmful - or more strictly speaking, not all forms of objectification are necessarily harmful. Consensual instrumentalization of another person—e.g. by using them as a ‘pillow’ to lean on - can be fine” (Nussbaum, 1995: 265).

Nussbaum's view poses a challenge to the idea shared by Kant and his supporters even as Nussbaum maintains that sexual objectification ought not be perceived wholly as a phenomenon that is necessarily harmful to individuals' humanity. Nussbaum makes the argument that treating someone like an object is possible without endangering their humanity and acknowledges, nevertheless, that objectification can occasionally take on harmful forms that seriously impair people's humanity. Nussbaum concurs with MacKinnon, Dworkin, and Kant that it is morally wrong to treat a person as merely an object of sexual desire when it comes to sexual objectification. These differing and somewhat related views of sexual objectification can be described as a way of grouping observed phenomena with a view for effective moral criticism.

5. Methodology

The methodology of this study is based on qualitative content analysis of selected digital performances. The study is grounded in feminist criticism and gender theory, which are used to critically analyse the performances. The analyses' findings are shown according to the categories of sexual objectification that Nussbaum and Langton distinguished. To analyse the performances and elucidate their contents, specialized methodologies such as observation, archival research, and theoretical viewpoints are employed. This strategy is deemed appropriate since the study's components call for theoretical analysis grounded in qualitative data.

Given that the objective of the qualitative approach is to establish a relationship between the various variables (digital performance and sexual objectification) through textual analysis and interpretation guided by the chosen theoretical framework, it appears to be appropriately applicable in this case.

Mr. Macaroni and the Notion of Objectification

Mr Macaroni is an entertainment channel which according to its YouTube Page (with the name 'Mr Macaroni') started in 2013. It operates on YouTube, Facebook and Instagram, though its contents are distributed through other social media platforms as well. The major character in the performance is Mr Macaroni who also doubles as the Producer and Content creator. As of 23rd December 2023, the YouTube page, *Mr Macaroni* had a total of 870,000 subscribers and 317 performance videos uploaded. The Facebook page had 4.3 million followers. The Instagram page had 3.8 million followers. Additionally, *Mr Macaroni* has an online television channel with the name *mrmacaronitv.com*.

The concept of objectification in *Mr Macaroni's* performances dwells much on the male gaze. Interestingly, it is a theme that runs through most of his performances as they mostly concentrate on devouring the woman figure based on her looks and the functions of her body parts. Though Laura Mulvey equates the male gaze with both active and passive roles that satisfy the spectator, *Mr Macaroni* chooses the active role as he directly considers women simply as erotic spectacle/objects used as to fulfil male fantasies and designed to satisfy the desires of the spectator. Implicitly, *Mr Macaroni* promotes a narcissistic way of portraying women as objects for men. Stirring the man's imagination that they ought to use women as objects of sexual desire.

Furthermore, Mr. Macaroni appears to support Haslanger's position that an objectified individual is thought to be ideally fitted to satiate the wants that their objectifier has for them. When one considers Mr. Macaroni's performances in this context, it is easy to draw comparisons with MacKinnon's theory, which holds that "being sexually objectified entails having a social meaning placed on one's identity that identifies one as someone who can be used for sexual purposes and then being used in that manner" (MacKinnon, 1989: 327). Invariably, *Mr. Macaroni* restates Kant's view on objectification as it is seen that his objectifying attempts are usually for sexual relationships or intending sexual relationships outside marriage. *Mr Macaroni* performances to considered in this study are: "My Ibadan Encounter" and "Dorothy Treats Freaky Daddy".

"My Ibadan encounter"

The performance opens with Mr Macaroni engaged in a phone call. He sights a lady approaching a beauty salon and automatically express interest in her, making it obvious that his interest is ignited by her looks. He ends his call abruptly and approaches the lady (Tiwalade). He begins his conversation with his signature remark "You're doing well" and confess that being in Ibadan, he was wondering why he is yet to get the 'blessings' of Ibadan as he knows quite well that Ibadan is 'blessed' and 'doing well'.

All this while, Mr Macaroni's gaze is fixed on Tiwalade's chest region. As Tiwa attempts to respond to his remarks, he hushes her not to say anything but to input her account number in his phone; Tiwa resists but her resistance is met with a stronger disapproval from Mr Macaroni. Tiwa succumbs and provide the digits. Immediately, Mr Macaroni transfers N300,000 to Tiwa and proudly declares so to her. Tiwa thanks him and make to take her leave, telling him that her destination is the beauty salon she was approaching as she needs some beauty services. Mr Macaroni excitedly offers to take care of all Tiwalade's expenses for the day and follows her to the saloon. As she walks ahead, Mr Macaroni makes seductive dance moves behind her and follows excitedly. In the beauty salon, he declares that the attendant should treat Tiwalade to all the services offered therein. Upon receiving all the services, Mr Macaroni urges Tiwalade to call for the bill so they can get going; suggesting they go get some privacy. Upon sighting a bill of N550,000, Mr Macaroni expresses surprise but nursing the thought of a private moment with Tiwa got him smiling and paying the bill excitedly. In trying to effect payment through cash transfer, he notices the account bears same name with the one Tiwa provided earlier, this causes him to enquire, and he was told that Tiwalade owns the beauty salon. Mr. Macaroni instantly becomes downcast; reluctantly paid the bill and pitifully walks out of the saloon, realising that Tiwa is not a lady he could so easily buy with his money. Mr. Macaroni's reaction upon realising that Tiwa is not up for 'ownership' through cash exchange strengthens the views of Barbara Herman (2002: 55) that "sexual interest in another is not interest in the other as a person".

Mr. Macaroni's attention in Tiwa appears to be focused on her bodily parts based on the things he does and says to her. Since Mr. Macaroni views Tiwa as an object intended to fulfil a purpose that suits him, it could be claimed that objectification in this case appears to be at least somewhat problematic. When Mr. Macaroni looks at Tiwa through the prism of sexual desire, he sees something that is wantable, desirable, and hence possessable. Viewed as an object then, Tiwa becomes nonautonomy. She is considered as having no control over her life but can be swayed by the desire of her objectifier; inherently, this interprets the denial of autonomy feature of objectification identified by Nussbaum. Furthermore, Korsgaard (1996) encapsulates this when she states that any person who is considered as a food source is being dehumanized from a person (moral use), someone with dignity, to an aesthetic object, something that has a cost associated with it. Interestingly, this assertion seems to be the underlining theme in the performances of Mr. Macaroni as he is always offering cash in request for pleasure. Significantly too, he often turndown any form of rejection, insisting that he can pay any cash price. This signals some sort of confidence and buttress the portrayal that every woman has a price tag which upon payment, she surrenders herself to be used and abused.

“Dorathy treats freaky daddy”

This episode of *Mr. Macaroni* presents a hospital situation. It opens with Mr Macaroni on a hospital bed and his wife (Mummy Wa) seated beside him. Their conversation centres on Mr Macaroni being fit to be discharged. Mummy Wa tries to convince Mr Macaroni to remain in the hospital and observe more rest, but he insists that he is fit for discharge and only requires a home prepared meal of pounded yam. His insistence meets Mummy Wa's approval, and they conclude on heading home soon. At this point, the Doctor (Dorathy) walks in; upon sighting Dorathy, Mr Macaroni expresses great interest in her, gazing wildly at her chest region. Dorathy reaffirms that Mr Macaroni is fit for discharge and that the process for his discharge will commence at once. As she makes to leave and get the paperwork done so he can be discharged, Mr Macaroni pulls off his clothes and feign sickness, shivering visibly. This comes as a rude shock to the other duo. As Dorathy approaches Mr Macaroni to examine him, he practically attempts taking his mouth to her chest region, gazing uncontrollably at her breast.

Dorathy acts professionally, assuring Mr. Macaroni that a specialised nurse will see to his just developed condition. She calls on an elderly nurse to attend to Mr Macaroni. Upon seeing the elderly nurse and her injection tray, Mr Macaroni stops shivering. The nurse assures Mummy Wa that Mr. Macaroni will be well taken care of after which he will see no other woman but his wife. As the nurse explains the number of injections he will be given, Mr Macaroni begs that he be allowed to go home as he is fully recovered and needs no medication. It is important to note that Laura Mulvey's (1989: 60) claim that “the pleasure of viewing someone as an object can become fixated into a perversion, producing obsessive voyeurs and Peeping Toms, whose only source of sexual satisfaction can come from actively controlling another person”, may help to explain Mr. Macaroni's reaction upon seeing Dorathy.

We live in a world ordered by sexual imbalance and *Mr. Macaroni* adds great strength to this biased standpoint. The performance split sexual pleasure looking into active (male) and passive (female); in application, It encourages situations in which the male gaze projects its ideals onto the feminine form. The women in the performances are also placed in exhibitionist roles as their appearances are styled for strong visual and erotic impacts. This episode of *Mr. Macaroni* brings to mind Mulvey's discourse of “Pleasure in Looking/Fascination with the Human Form”. It supports Sigmund Freud's concept of scopophilia which refers to situations in which the act of seeing is thought to be pleasurable in and of itself. In *The Three Essays on Sexuality*, According to Mulvey (1989: 59), scopophilia is classified by Freud as “one of the component instincts of sexuality which exist as drives quite independently of the erotogenic zones.” Freud links scopophilia to the attitude that sees other people as objects that can be watched with curiosity and control. In the case of *Mr. Macaroni*, scopophilia could be applied from two viewpoints: The first, emerges from pleasure in considering another person to be an object of sexual stimulation through sight. The other viewpoint could be in terms of the constitution of ego and narcissism which ensues from identification with images seen. The first viewpoint could be said to be of sexual instinct, while the second is of ego libido.

Decoding Nussbaum and Langton's Classes of Objectification (Key Findings)

Mr Macaroni satisfies a primordial fancy for pleasurable looking and go further to develop scopophilia in a narcissistic way. More often than not, objectification occurs independent of what women want; it is something carried out against will. Clearly from above discourse, objectifying perception splits a person into parts thus serving to elevate one interest over another. Relating Nussbaum and Langton's form of objectification to the performances studied, the following can be deduced:

- **Instrumentality:** *Mr Macaroni* treating women, not in all sense of humanity but as an instrument for his sexual satisfaction reinforces the instrumentality feature of objectification identified by Nussbaum.
- **Denial of autonomy:** *Mr Macaroni* characterises women as lacking in autonomy and self-determination for if otherwise, there would have been no need to try enforcing decisions on women or trying to have control over women with exchange of cash. *Mr Macaroni*, through his portrayals, supposes that women can be acquired for personal satisfaction once the objectifier fulfils some acts of gifting. This strengthens the denial of autonomy feature that defines objectification.
- **Inertness:** *Mr Macaroni* buys into this as he generally considers women as lacking in activities. Additionally, he engages in performances that projects his daughter (Motunde) as lacking in agency; turning to desirous and desperate marriages for her. He even appeals to the audience to help in search of a husband for Motunde. Not less than 20% of his video uploads are dedicated to this theme; some of such titles are: “Yemi my Lover”, “My Fantabulous In-law”, “My English In-law”, “My Funny In-law”, “My Unfortunate In-law”, “AY wants to marry Motunde”, “Ogogo and my IG In-law”, “Tony Umez (My Darling In-law)”, “My In-law”, “My Konfam In-law”, “Lasisi the Angry Bird”, “Motunde has been Jazzed”, “Broda Shaggi my In-law”, “My Working In-law”, “Multi Personality Disorder”, “My Barrister In-law”, “Kanayo my In-law”, “My Sleeping in-laws”, “My Daughter wants to marry Aproko Doctor”, “Larry Adeleke the In-Law”, “The Kung Fu In-Law”, “My Better Half”, “Who wants to be a Husband”, “Motunde brings a Footballer Home”, “Portable the Wahala In-Law”, “Motunde returns with Oba Solomon”, “My In-Law is a Hypeman”, “My Shy In-Law”, “My In-Law is a Tetescopher”, “My In-Law has many Wives”, “The Prayerful Husband”, “Tobechukwu My In-Law”, “OG Kcee my new In-Law”, “Motunde brings Cobhams”, “Brain Jotter comes for Motunde”, “The Stingy In-Law”, “Jim Iyke the gentle In-Law”, “My Righteous In-Law”, “The Sleeping In-Laws” amongst others.

- **Fungibility:** *Mr Macaroni* repeatedly treats women as playthings whose bodily attributes justify their being objectified. More worrisome is the fact that most of his performances (which objectifies women) are programmed to promote some goods or services. The promotion covers products/companies like Revolution Plus Property, Momo Agent, My Paddi App, Stanbic IBTC, 1960 Bet, Atco Homes, Kokobid, Villa Picasso, Thank You Cash, Farm Fund Africa, 1xBet and Aella among others.
- **Violability:** This stance is also promoted by *Mr Macaroni* as he supposes that every woman is programmed for sexual satisfaction and all that need to be done is offer some cash incentives. This, probably informs his generous attitude towards women he develops sexual interest in. He usually would not let them utter a word but persuades them to accept his cash gift. This singular act suggests that women, upon receipt of cash gifts are boundless and open for violation.
- **Ownership:** *Mr Macaroni* leans on this notion too as he considers women to be 'things' he could own at a price. Often, he expresses great disappointment when he cannot have his way after offering the 'price'.
- **Denial of subjectivity:** This feature appears subtle in *Mr Macaroni*, where it is assumed that women need not rely on their personal preferences but should be swayed by what they are offered at a time.
- **Reduction to body:** This is the case where the woman's body is divided into parts and the parts made to represent the human being as a whole. *Mr Macaroni* presents situations where interests in other persons are informed by sexual appetite. It therefore applies that the body of the other is the object of interest and not the person in all moral justification. Mr Macaroni's gaze at ladies reaffirms this and unveils the body parts he is most attracted to.
- **Reduction to appearance:** *Mr Macaroni's* interests in women are often woven around a presumptuous look. This defined look characterises the women he expresses sexual appetite over while his wife bears the opposite look and gets to be cheated on all the time. It is an indirect message that women ought to rely more on their appearance than whatever makes them human. It informs that women's appearances are the ultimate element to draw sexual appetite from men.
- **Silencing:** *Mr Macaroni* assumes that women are incapable of self-representation and all they need for the activation of their sexual function is cash gift.

The above analyses supposes that *Mr Macaroni* seeks the position of an autonomous subject who places himself in charge of his supposedly non-autonomous women considered as mere sexual instruments, objects and relevant tools for sexual pleasure. All these dynamics can agitate the mind toward varied personal, social and metaphysical distrust of what really matters.

Mr. Macaroni seems to support the idea that men have an inclination for women, but not so that they could appreciate women's lives and careers but rather so that they might be objects of men's pleasure. It reveals some kind of inclination that could as well be described as an appetite levelled to the enjoyment of the other; this could be conceived as the sexual impulse that drives man to consider another as an instrument for his service. This is consistent with Kant's claim that objectification reduces the objectifier to the status of "an instrument for satisfying desires and inclinations; but by this it is dishonoured and put on a par with animal nature." Therefore, the sexual desire runs the risk of making humans seem like animals" (1963: 156).

6. Contribution of the study

This study contributes to existing body of knowledge on digital performances in general and specifically dwells on the Nigerian situation. This furthers the conversation on the gains and pains that come with the wholesome embrace of virtual privileges. Implicitly, it opens up areas of investigation that will create more insight and attention to virtually promoted contents.

7. Implications of the study

The digital performances studied employ humour as a platform to promote objectification. Within the entertaining frontals are deposits of deeply rooted objectifying actions and statements. Analysis of these performances reveal their alignment with Marxist discourse of dominance and oppression in capitalism and further define their linkages with the objectification of women.

Notably, when objectification takes place, sexual desire is emphasized as a disposition towards another human being based on their genitalia definition and not because such is a human being. This seems to be the sole agenda of *Mr. Macaroni's* performances, ignoring that the satisfaction of such activated desire could result in human degradation thus positioning sexual desire as an act of dishonour since the person's existence as a human being is ignored and only their sexual function is recognised. Promotion of arts contents via the virtual space ought not be a license for exercising extreme privileges, rather it should be adopted for improved performances, audience engagement and humane content promotion.

8. Conclusion

Through a globalised lens, it could be established that objectification, just like capitalism preserves patriarchal notions and underscore constructed misrepresentation for females thus giving strength to biased gender hierarchies. In Nigeria digital performances, female representation is confined to certain stereotypical definitions of what it means to be female. Female identity is made to be defined by sexuality, yet it is circumscribed within imposed societal expectations. In the name of entertainment, the woman's dignity and self-independence is sacrificed on the altar of products promotion and

sales increase. Relatively, *Mr Macaroni* focuses on men desiring women and wanting them in their possession. It reveals men appetite to enjoy women in a way one could enjoy a collection of objects and in achieving this, the performance promotes the notion of men expressing ownership over women so they can control, use and abuse them at will.

The contents promoted through performances tells a lot about our belief both at the collective and individual levels. It places us on a scale of cultural definition which may or may not be true to our identity; this is partly because arts, as a tool for dissemination and influence plays a significant role in shaping societal perception and relationships. Therefore, arts should be reflected in good light and its sensitivity put into consideration -notwithstanding its operation in the digital space which is quite liberal in nature and calls for more engagement; caution and discipline should still be the guideline bearing in mind that if performances should offer anything to contemporary troubled times, it should be the capacity to recreate by provoking us to become aware of the arts inputs to life and living and then consider how much these encounters might take significance in our lives and the lives of others. This caution is particularly important as performance experience is no longer bound to stage defined framework but operates in a globalized and interactive context. By such, the technological infusion makes it possible for social and cultural formations to be developed and transmitted same.

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