Objectification of women in carnival Calabar: an emerging paradigm

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Abstract
A trend that is developing in Carnival Calabar is the objectification of women. Carnival Calabar is a festival that brings families together. Most of the participants are young people. What messages is Carnival Calabar selling to its various publics and what influence do these messages have on the young population? To answer these questions, two descriptive methodologies were employed in this study. The first was content analysis which comprised of pictures, participant observation and on-site participatory interviews. The second was the survey which comprised of focus group discussion. The following findings were made that the Carnival Calabar nude images portray women in her traditional role and sexual appeal to men. Secondly, Carnival Calabar’s sexualized images often make girls lose their self-esteem. It is recommended that Carnival Calabar develop its unique brand of Carnival without following the Caribbean and other nations’ models which one of its distinctions is parading nude female bodies. Carnival Calabar content should portray women constructively and in a wider variety of positive roles. It is recommended that more women should be involved as scriptwriters, producers, designers and in the position of decision making within the state’s tourism industry to influence the messages of women portrayed in Carnival Calabar.

Keywords:
Carnival Calabar; women; objectification; images.

1 INTRODUCTION
The image of women has been of great importance in all cultures, civilizations, and countries. The image we have in our minds about anything or persons relates to patterns handed down by traditions, borrowed from other cultures or adapted in a new context, the image refers to perceptions, values, beliefs, and ideas. Image according to Chombart Lauwe is defined as follows:

“A study of how men and women represent themselves...the status of women in relation to different social structures...this term representation must be understood in its broad sense...a number of factors of social environment related to the experience of the individuals belonging to a particular culture...differences may occur in the perception of objects, situations, and persons according to whether the observer belongs to one or another different social class in one and the same country. According to their perceptions, individuals are clearly conscious of the groups to which they belong, of the various social structures and of their situation in relation to these structures and the images they form are distinctly related thereto. Individuals belonging to the same groups, the same social environment or the same category in the same society usually form the same images (1962: 33)

The implication of this is that the image of women in a social environment where there is a strong rural culture or tradition will differ from countries with much higher standards of living. At the same time even though when industrialization and economic power may advance but a fewer number of women are in the labor market, the image of family relationships will exert a strong influence on how women are represented. In countries where a mix of colonization and traditional patterns interplay, they bring a complex perception of the image of women. When customs concerning bride, price exist there is a tendency to regard women as having a role as objects of exchange (Bassey & Bubu 2019). Many of our societies are bound to the idea of male biological, psychological, legal, and spiritual superiority, and the image of the woman as a dependent, powerless, submissive, gentle, and docile being. The gender relations that posit that men are superior to women's births male dominance, and even male ownership of women and is present in most societies are reflected in their laws and customs. It often manifests in violence against women which is an extension of a continuum of beliefs that grants men the right to control women's behavior (Douge-Proper 2018) and body.

Many patriarchial cultures objectify women, Objectification according to John Barber “Is where women are seen for their faces and bodies and used as sex objects rather than as humans, it is behavior that encourages women to focus on their looks and sexuality. Women develop the ideal of seeing their bodies as not personal self but as sexual objects” (Parpart et al., 2000: 98). Their value and worth are measured in what their bodies can get and give. Today, entertainment media specifically music videos, movies, television, and festivals are using this concept to make a profit. Thus, the media can shape the culture's sense of dating, romance, sex, and what 'ideal' within society. The sexual attitudes of society are shaped and that has effects that can affect all demographics amongst society. This media action can proceed because sex sells and this objectification of women is what society has proven they want to see in entertainment media. Carnival producers also use women's bodies to sell the events.

The origins of Carnival are debatable and shrouded in mystery but they create a delirious and beautiful experience. Regarded as a rite of passage from darkness to light as well as the celebration of fertility, many carnivals have been woven into folklore for centuries. All Carnivals are rooted in the rituals and traditions of particular people where it is performed. One of the earliest carnivals can be traced to the Dionysiac festival.

The dionysiac festival was a time of revelry, and Dionysus, a god of vine, hence wine, was closely associated with fertility and by extension plain, ordinary sex., Dionysus, also known as Bacchus, lent his name to orgies of drinking and sex-Bacchanales-practiced.
in his honor. The ancient Greek, who accepted the performance of athletic events by nude participants and admired the beauties of the undraped male and female body, entertained a healthy respect for sex as a perfectly natural function. (Jordan 1996: 74)

Others believe that the carnival was originally spawned from celebratory Roman orgies held in honour of Bacchus (Baillet, 2017). Modern days carnival can be found in the following countries; Jamaica, Grenada, Italy, Dominica, Haiti, Cuba, St. Thomas, St. Martin; in Central and South America in Belize, Panama, Brazil; and in large cities in Canada and the U.S., Spain, and Nigeria. Here is one account of carnivals

Hundreds and hundreds of years ago, the followers of the Catholic religion in Italy started the tradition of holding a wild costume festival right before the first day of Lent. Because Catholics are not supposed to eat meat during Lent, they called their festival, carnival — which means “to put away the meat.” As time passed, carnivals in Italy became quite famous; and in fact, the practice spread to France, Spain, and all the Catholic countries in Europe. Then as the French, Spanish, and Portuguese began to take control of the Americas and other parts of the world, they brought with them their tradition of celebrating the carnival. Carnival was introduced to Trinidad around 1785, as the French settlers began to arrive. Today, the carnival in Trinidad is like a mirror that reflects the faces of the many immigrants who have come to this island nation. African, Asian, and American Indian influences have been particularly strong (Isongke 2018: 13).

In summary origins of Carnival are traceable to four key factors-fertility rites and sexual freedom and revolution and fight for racial and class justice. "Trinidad's carnival has long been a source of inspiration for Carnivals in the Caribbean region, has been exported outside the region and is now considered global" (Keith Nurse qtd in Riggio 2004: 246). Carnival is such an important aspect of life in Trinidad that many schools believe that sponsoring a carnival band is a way to teach young people about their roots and culture. Some popular Carnivals include Nottinghill, Maida Gras, Cologne, Venice, and Carnival of Santa Cruzdo Tenerife. Carnivals combine vivid spectacle, parades, eccentric, and colour clothes, masks, music, Fun fare food, food, hedonistic rituals, and many other elements.

Carnival Calabar is birthed fifteen years ago, though the beginnings can be traced to ancient traditions of ‘Usio Isua’ amongst the Efik people. According to Etubom Asuquo Okon Ita ‘Usio Isua’ ‘Usio Isua’ is usually a transitory period between an old year and a new one marked by a lot of festivities. For decades, during the Christmas season, different Efik clans had masquerade competitions featuring popular dance cults like Ekpe, Abang, Ubom, Atambembe, Ikotw, Tinkoriko, Ekong, Nnabo and other dance parades displaying their arts between the millennium park, Watt Market Round About till as far as Anwa Nyoro (lit: Dance ground) or Efe Asabo (Lit Python shrine), the highest-ranking and foremost Ekpe shrine in Efik Land about 3km away. There were wrestling matches, boat raggata, swimming competitions, feasting music, and costume parades on different days, competitions and festivities attracted a large audience that would gather from all Efik clans and their neighbors in Cameroon to watch.

According to Gabe Onah, "It was a tradition that was later transformed by former Governor Donald Duke and his wife, Onari in 1999 when they organized the first Christmas festival. In 2005, it blossomed to become a full-fledged festival called the ‘Calabar Festival’ involving different events including the Carnival Calabar.

"In order to further enrich the aesthetics of the performance in the Carnival Calabar, ex-governor of Cross River State in Nigeria Mr. Donald Duke led a twenty man team from the state of Spain in Trinidad and Tobago to participate in the 2005 Carnival of that country in the Safari band in 2007. The Carnival Calabar which at inception in 2004 was a one-day parade by five carnival bands- Bayside, Freedom, Passion 4, Masta Blasta and Seagull was expelled by the Imoke administration. The former governor of Cross River State Senator Liyel Imoke introduced the cultural Parade and children Carnival thereby making the grand finals a two-day event. Mrs. Obiama Imoke also added a beauty pageant. The Carnival Calabar Beauty Queen Pageant in 2007” (Giant Strides, qtd in Isongke 2018: 13).

In Liyel Imoke's times, Carnival Calabar was a two-day event which held on the 26th and 27th December every year. 26th December used to be for children and the cultural parade while 27th was the day for the adult carnival where the five competing bands displayed. Now, the five competing bands (owned by citizens of the state and supported by the Government) display on the 28th of December while the international Carnival, that is, the parade of nations holds on the 29th December.

In 2015, the present governor Prof. Ben Ayade introduced the Bikers’ parade which brought about his emergence as the tourism man of the year in the year 2016. Also, in 2016, Prof. Ben Ayade also introduced the Miss Africa pageant which is said to have the mandate of strengthening the state’s culture and tourism in addition the Christmas Festival and Calabar Carnival. He has also introduced a non-competing band called, the Governor’s band (Isongke 2018: 13).

Today, the Carnival Calabar is a big event involving Government, cooperate, sponsors, individuals, hospitality industry, security sector, medical personnel, small entrepreneurs, artists, musicians, costumers’ dancers, choreographers, float designers, scripts writers, dramatists, tourist, ordinary citizens, and five competing bands. In summary, Eze Orji and Cajetan in their article ‘Contents of Carnival Calabar’ quote Esiabi Irobi:

Carnival Calabar is a parade of many arts, include traditional and contemporary dances, costumes, music, acrobatics, magic, masquerades, puppetry, drumming, choreography, scripting, spectacles sound and more. The whole traditions of Africa festival and ritual theatre; we must bear in mind, with all its complex music, drum, language, dance architecture, songs, spatial configurations, choreography, and masking (Orji 2016: 260).

In recent years Carnival Calabar has presented the female body as a sexual fantasy, this has been expressed through promotional materials, music, dance, and costumes worn by the performers especially in an international parade. The question that arises is – What connotations are the nude bodies giving to the world and what image of women is carnival Calabar portraying?
• To assess the perception of women portrayed in Carnival Calabar nude images
• To establish the influence of Carnival Calabar nude images on the young population

2 Methodology and Theoretical Framework

Two descriptive methodologies were employed in this study; the first was Content analysis—which comprised of pictures, participant-observations, and on-site participatory interviews. The second was the survey- which comprised of focus group discussion. Focused group discussions were conducted for four groups of twelve persons each. Two of these group comprised of young people ranging from 12-25yrs and, two other groups consisted of adults from 30-55yrs.

This paper employed critical theory and feminist media theory. The works of Stuart Hall, Roland Barthes, Laura Mulvey, Teresa De Lauretis and Erving Goffman are of particular use as they each make valuable contributions to the ways we understand culture, gender, and media technology interpretations. Lawrence Grossberg asserts, "Cultural studies now look at how it is that particular texts, practices, identities already appear to be interpreted, their politics predefined, while acknowledging that this appearance is always part illusory because it is never guaranteed" (1997: 225); hence, as a discipline, Cultural Studies is ideal for understanding the politics at work in the performances that promote and discuss Cross River State cultures. Cultural Studies also provides tools for analyzing relations of power, which will assist in understanding which individuals or groups are marginalized or lack representation in Carnival. On the topic of power, Grossberg states, "Power is real and operates at every level of our lives, located in the limited production and unequal distribution of capital, money, meaning, identities, desires, emotions…” (1997: 231), thus illuminating how culture is indeed constructed as opposed to inherent.

Additionally, feminist media theory is also useful as gender plays a crucial role in Carnival. Women’s bodies are used to promote the festival much more frequently and in different ways than their male counterparts. Asha St. Benard states that, “the dominant discourse of Carnival uses heteronormative language and often has sexual undertones, which are interesting to explore further as they assist in establishing and a binary conception of sex and gender” (2015: 34). The two theories – critical theory and feminist theory, are closely related as they address issues of power and examine the ways culture is constructed in societies.

3 The Carnival Calabar Bands Performance in 2017 Competition

The five major bands that compete for the band of the year award namely: Masta Blasta, Seagull, Passion 4, Freedom, and Bayside bands put up their presentations to align with the theme of the year using a combination of the arts. Usually, the parades take about 12hours as bands move through four adjudication points along the 12 Km route of Carnival Calabar. All bands start their display one after the other from the Eleven Eleven Millenium Park and parade through Mary Slessor, Marian, and MCC to the Stadium. They have judges for various categories such as; Band of the year, Kings and Queens Competition, Costumes, Floats, and best Carnival spirit. Kings and Queens Competition are usually done on a separate night before the main event. It was formerly done on Christmas Day; now, it is done on the same day of the Carnival.

The five major bands take part in the competition and each has its colour codes as follows; Masta Blasta – Orange, Freedom Band – Yellow, Bayside – Blue, Passion 4 – Green, and Seagull Band – Red. Most of these bands have at the helm of their affair’s political leaders and elites even though they recruit people from other walks of life. Passion 4, founded by its former leader Hon Chris Agibe and led by Barr Attah Ochinke has won the band of the year more than any other band and has a lot of people in the creative and cultural industries as its members and consultants. It also engages a lot of tertiary students as its members.

Masta Blasta has large community followership. It is a band of the people and has a lot of sponsors and members in business and Government circles. The Masta Blasta band thrills the people with rich entertaining content and always wins the band with carnival spirits’. Its leader is Senator Gershom Bassey. Bayside Band, as the name implies takes its membership mostly from indigenous people of old Calabar with its original leader as Donald Duke and now led by Mrs. Onari Duke (John Odey led for a couple of years). Freedom Band was founded by Capt. Henry Eruor and Larry Esin and has politicians with one-time deputy Governor Effiok Cobham at the head of its affairs. Freedom band’s performances in recent years have greatly improved. This led to their winning of the band of the year award (in 2020 there was a tie with passion 4).

Seagull is owned by a female politician, Florence Ita Giwa. It tries to cut a name for itself as it parades stars from Nigerian film and the music industry. The band revolves around an individual. It is known for creating a lot of spectacle in the use of costumes. A close analysis of five competing bands shows that 3 bands have males as their leaders and two are female leaders. Many of the bands use more males in design, in scripting, in choreography, and as day to day managers of carnival activities. There are a lot of female choreographers, costume and makeup and hair designers and scriptwriters, males have the upper hand in float and prop designs (Yu & Umukoro 2017: Endong & Floribert 2017). More women are used as revellers, it is their faces and bodies that are used as visual representations of the carnival and appear on adverts and promotional materials.

The central theme for 2017 was migration so all competing bands worked around this thought developing their Carnival stories and scripts. Bayside Band story was “The Grass Isn’t Always Greener on the Other Side: Arise Africa” It opened

"with an allegoric truck that is a slave ship split into 3 sections: First part is slave ship, the second part is the community of people and huts, and the third part is agriculture and farming. The community continues to dance and then the horn of the ship is heard, the white man comes and takes the people into slavery. Years later, African Americans return to Africa, and the indigenous people find them glamorous and knowledgeable, so they try to go on their own and are taken into various forms of slavery, e.g., sex
freedom. The Africans that remain in Africa now resolve to build themselves up and gain the knowledge and expertise that they need to prosper on their own without migrating away from Africa.”

Freedom Band in “The Memoir of Kassiba” tells a story somewhere in Africa, the story of the prosperous nation of Kassiba, south of the Sahara, the fictional land of Kassiba is beautiful, green and the people lived in love, peace, and harmony, and were bounded by brotherliness. Life later became completely strangulating and Kassiba citizens had no other choice than to migrate to greener pastures, and they later returned” (2017: 1).

Seagull Band in their write up “The Odyssey” says that for 2017, “Their interpretation takes a prismatic view of the forms of migration and causal factors of human migration. The epicenter of this interpretation is the two major forms of migration- the 18th century infamous/ involuntary yet monumental slave trade and the modern-day voluntary slavery /trafficking” (1).

Passion 4’s Black Bird: Fly away Peter, fly away Paul. “Blackbird metaphorically represents the black Africans. Fly Away Peter, Fly Away Paul is also a metaphor for Black Africans who are made to leave the African continent by choice or by force. Holistically, flying birds are by themselves a symbol of migration. Inspiration for the theme Black Bird: Fly Away Peter, fly away Paul is drawn from two principal sources; Nina Simone's Song by the name Black Bird, which chronicles the sufferings of Black Americans in America. While "Fly Away Peter, Fly Away Paul" is drawn from the children's rhyme "Two Little Black Birds" (2017: 1).

Masta Blasta's The Masta's Pastures give us an insight into their storyline "Rather than re-presenting the myriads of migrations that have taken place from time immemorial, they represented and universal interpretation of the phenomenon which is about hope and fulfillment; travels, trials, and triumphs; as well as territories and pastures." (2017: 1–4) A close look at the stories shows that all the bands except Masta Blasta had similar storylines. The following is a skeletal analysis on the band’s performances.

Passion 4; there was a completeness in their presentation, everything blended to make a statement and gave a feeling of drinking the nectar of the gods. The exquisite costumes helped to explain the storyline or drama, their props, music, hairstyle, footwear, makeup were well orchestrated and fabulous from beginning to the end, and they sustained the interpretation throughout their sections. Their truck was awe-inspiring. Freedom Band also did very well, their story, props sequencing, costumes were good. Their aircraft was a marvel, their acrobatics; attention-commanding especially the young man whose face was turned backward. This got everyone talking. Their costumes had plenty of African motifs and were beautiful.

Bayside had one or two sections that went well and there was some type of improvement. It needs to do far more, even some non-competing bands did better in terms of visual impact. Seagull did well, but this year their costumes lacked the luster that usually stands it out. Masta Blasta's storyline was different from all others, their presentation was an attempt to stand out, to be different from all others but it went wrong. Their presentation in the stadium got no applause, it was abstract, people could not relate with the story.

4 OBJECTIFICATION OF WOMEN PORTRAYAL IN THE 2017 CARNIVAL CALABAR BANDS 2017 EDITION

Thought-out the bands there were provocative images of women partly dressed scattered and splashed here and there! In 2011 or 2012 Passion 4 first introduced frontline girls and all other bands subsequently followed suit. These are models that go through a rigorous screening selection exercise. They possess carnival bodies—the ideal unattainable white man beauty ideology sanctioned by the international fashion industry (Carlson 2010). The process of choosing them in a form of objectification because they parade almost naked, sometimes naked-to scrutinize their bodies for physical flaws, if not found acceptable, they are rejected. They are dressed in the scantiest of costumes after Caribbean Carnivals and used as a king to get the attention of the audience to band performance. They wriggle, writhe, and twist their bodies in erotic dance. They are the face of the carnival bands.

In 2017, the Mexican front light girls of the Governor’s band performed ‘a la curve’ in their black, blue, and red colors and peacock feathers, their costumes left little to imagination. In all the bands, the frontline girls wore short mini or mkpin skirts with their bellies showing and some had bra-like tops only—which were scandalous, many of the ladies had their breasts popping out! Freedom Band in the last three years has started a tradition of including sections like ladies in gold sequins and flared trousers with frilled cream and yellow black stripes whose danced could be described as erotic.

Passion 4 strip tease unit was another section that was graphically sexual. Imo state-contingent had a lot of women doing sexy dances and wearing brazen costumes. The carnival bands' costumes for women are becoming skimpier, shorter, and more revealing which was not this way at the beginning of Carnival Calabar. There is now more influence of Brazil, Trinidad Carnival. The female bodies have become more fashionable, these performers have also become bolder in their display of erotic pictures, thus, transporting audience members to sensual planes.

One costume designer from freedom said:

“The people want sex and bodily delights...so this is what we give.”

An adjudicator said:

'Carnival is not church...is a time to throw-out all inhibitions relax and enjoy.”

One of the Band leaders said:

"we are out to win therefore we must do popular things. The audience will not applaud if you are prude...this is a sexual healing space so that is what we are doing...men leave here feeling good..."
A female dancer from Passion 4 said:

"They want breasts and buttocks… so we give them and what is wrong… This is the essence of Carnival"

These statements by Carnival leaders, designers and revelers show that Carnival Calabar is used as a channel to sell sex to its audiences to bring sex tourists to Calabar. Objectification of women in the Carnival band is represented in costumes, dance, music, story, and promotional materials.

5 Objectification of Women Portrayal in Calabar International Carnival Parade 2017

International Carnival was a display of sex, it was an invitation to all and sundry to enjoy the pleasures of the flesh. Many of the performances glorified and worshipped the goddess of sex. Sexual connotations were showcased through costumes, music, and dance. Seventeen countries including Nigeria performed. Of the seventeen countries that displayed, eight countries’ performances had strong erotic messages! These were Ghana, Southern Africa 1 and 2, Mexico, Tanzania, Belize Brazil, and Swaziland.

Ghanian performers were ladies who drummed and sang in their Kente outfit, during the performance they did a striptease and undressed leaving only panties and bra. The music that ushered them into performance space was the infamous one corner that already prepared the audience's minds for a sexual mood. Their dance was partly comprised of three major topics acrobatics, energetic steps, and wild erotic movements. Southern Africa continent had two teams. In team one, the younger maidens came up open breasts worn over bead skirts or animal skins. It was a traditional Zulu dance that was energetic and breast shaking. These nude dancers caused a lot of stir among male politicians openly gaped as captured by the media! Swaziland dancers wore traditional Swazi costumes of Nkwalana ceremony- First-fruit. The breast displaying ladies tied their wrappers toga style and one bare breast hanging out. Tanzanians were well covered in white and green flowing butterfly looking gowns, but from the beginning to the end it was the dance of Eros, many times the female dancers lay on the ground and mated with mother earth. One of the female dancers even left her performing space and went were judges sat and was shaking her bum in front of some male judges, even touching them, this caused a lot of commotion.

Belize ladies dressed in tiny panties and bra; they were almost nude. They promoted eroticism. The ladies displayed their bodies as wares before the hungry audience who screamed for more. Brazil and Mexico traditional Carnival countries dressed in Carnival costumes. Mexico's first set of costumes had multiple colors and dresses yellow, then they changed on stage to shades of orange and black trousers with ruffled hands, they wore bra tops. They had long tails behind. A lady in total white did the opening glee, she had a feathered headgear like Abeng headpieces worn on top of orange scarf, she wore gold boots that had orange top. Her white swim trunks were very provocative some people referred to her as an angel dancer in white caused a lot of commotion and reactions as she was seen shaking her bum all over the playing space. Brazil Samba dance was a dance of nudity, as many the young female dancer showed off their smooth-skinned bums.

6 Young People Perceptions of Carnival Calabar Nude Images

Most of the people interviewed acknowledged that: The use of a female body as mere decoration or attention-getting device diminishes women's worth and esteem. The following are responses from select females that were interviewed. According to Juliet Oko, an SS3 student of UNICAL international school opined that:

The way Carnival Calabar international parade portrays girls is shameful when the women appear, I just cover my hands over my face, especially as my male cousin and brothers laugh and joke about the girls, it is disgusting, I can't even repeat what they say…. but it reduces me and all girls to zero!

Another girl shade Bello of University of Calabar Undergraduate says:

The parading of nude girls during Carnival Calabar ignores every other aspect of female personality and their potentials as humans…. they become mere playthings … I wonder why those women do it.

Atim Effiong, a younger banker had this to say:

When the women walk nude on stage during Carnival every woman in Calabar walks with them in degradation and pity, let this rubbish stop. It is not fair to women.

Esame Effiah of Edgerly avers that:

As a young girl of twelve, I wonder what the Governor is teaching us, why do they bring these girls from South Africa to come and walk naked in our Stadium?

Are they encouraging us to walk nude? Would they be happy to see their daughters doing the same?

Esther Joel of Mary Slessor Academy has this to say:

Me and my friends do not like this… in school the boys abuse us and say we are all cheap nude walkers, they say women are toys for pleasures…. we feel bad.

Their male counterpart in Secondary Schools was also interviewed and the following are a few responses:

Did you see any boy or male parade nude?
This tells you that girls are cheap (says Edet Okon Etim, a 12years old Auntie Margaret student)

How can any sane person walk nude for money....do they force the women, they are low, low animals (says Wisdom Francis, of Unical International school, he is of 15years of age)

Women walking nude just tells me they have no class, no personality. Women, my father says are made for fun (Jerome Ogar, who works in Oil and gas industry)

Since it is something meant for the public and children…it is bad to display this level of nudity, what are we becoming and teaching the young? (David Young, a final year student of the University of Calabar)

What is happening shows that we have become a people without morals and conscience- how we can exhibit naked women in the name of culture (Oku, a student at the University of Calabar)

M. Okokon, who works as an events manager says:

The government is importing sexual demons and worshipping sexual gods. This is not good for the spirituality, morals, and image of the state. So, tell them to stop this madness.

Some participants, however, bought the idea of nudity in Carnival, as follows:

From time immemorial women are used for entertainment purposes...so there is nothing wrong with this Carnival. (Ubong Okon , Banker).

O! I enjoy the nudity I believe many that say otherwise are hypocrites, a normal male enjoys the pleasures of the flesh. Women are meant to be enjoyed. (Abang O)

Anytime...anywhere our ancestors did not wear clothes, they went about nude and could easily grab any woman they wanted. They enjoyed God’s creation. I say to the procures of Carnival. Give us more Nudity (Offiong I)

Africans never wore clothes, so what is new about nudity.... I say let us return to our traditional values (Joseph E)

Carnival is Africa and Africa is Carnival...fun, flesh, and drinks, more, more (L.B Unicem)

7 KEY FINDINGS

7.1 Image of Women

The display of nude bodies gives negative impressions and perception of women Carnival Calabar nude image portrays women as a common, prostitute, cheap, properties, toys, entertainment, objects pleasures, giving not serious, bedroom and the other room. Many thinks that indigenous Efik woman is promiscuous. Some however argued that nudity is natural and 'nothing spoil'. Carnival Calabar is specifically painting indigenous Calabar women “bad”. Many think that the indigenous Efik woman has sexual prowess and men are invited to get her.

7.2 Influence on Young People

Many agreed that Carnival Calabar is shaping the sexual behavior of young people. Many are indulging in sexual activities at this period! There is also an increase in alcoholism and stealing. Younger ones are now not respecting women, they treat them like filth.

7.3 Gender Impact

There is increasing violence against women, sexual harassment, and rape cases increase during this season. There is an increase of teenage pregnancy around this season as many young people indulge in careless sexual activities brought about by staying together for long hours during rehearsal. This notion is affirmed by Milla Cozart Riggio; Birth rate, go up in Carnival Cultures nine months after Carnival (2004: 21). However, we will need to examine health and police records as well as sales of alcoholic during this season to further validate this claim

7.4 Fashion and Spiritual Impact

Some young girls copy this Carnival Calabar nude showgirls in fashion and dressing patterns. Many, especially church leaders agree that many demons are bought to Calabar to cause immorality and poverty and demanded the scrapping of Carnival and replacing with prayers, music festival to honor the Almighty. Some say there is no spiritual implication. Yet others agree that Africa gods are honored and are not demons.

7.5 Carnival Calabar Future

Many of the younger respondents want Carnival Calabar to be modified, adapt, and not copy other Carnivals. The older women are not satisfied with nudity in Carnival Calabar. Some respondents’ especially older males want it to compete with other Carnivals- they feel it is not yet there. While some opine that “The essence of Carnival is flesh, flesh. Carnival – it is all about the exploration of “Flesh.”

8 DISCUSSION

Many of the thoughts expressed by respondents in this paper about the sexualization of the female body by Carnival Calabar bands and the Carnival Calabar international parade are affirmed by several studies done in the Caribbean and other carnivaleized cultures around the world. For instance, Asha St. Bernard’s writing in Happiest People Alive asserts that:
The constant over-representation of the female body often excessively sexualized has many implications not only does this practice support patriarchy and the objectification and misogynistic treatment of women but it also it persuasively affirms the Island as a sexualized, sexualized paradise, as these women's bodies implicitly invite people to Trinidad (2015: 70).

Lewis and Pile in their work, ‘Women, body, space: Rio Carnival writes:

*Carnival is profoundly gendered ... Whereas our perception of Carnival is a time to challenge social norms or a period of role reversal in Rio. The Carnival is just another season to live out and even emphasize norms including the different gender roles of men and women (1996: 2).

The above citations show that women are used as puppets who dance to the tunes of the elitist middle-class male who use women for their economic gains and pleasure. It is no longer a myth or fairy tale that sexualization and objectification are twins' tools used in Carnival competition. Natasha Barnes asserts that:

"When cable television networks make images of carnival revelers available to global audiences, what is delivered in these screens, devoid of history and context are parades of scantily clad, gyrating women that appear to market the island and its culture as a destination for sex tourism“ (2000: 96).

The shift towards the objectification of women in recent years comes from the capitalist agenda. According to Asha St. Benard:

“Globalisation and the widespread in the advancement in the use of technology and social media to advertise Carnival bring about shifts in Carnival aesthetics and structure” (2015: 27).

It is important to state that economic drive and gain affect the aesthetics of and organization of Modern Carnival. Natasha Barnes affirms that:

"The collusion of global capitalism in the market and commodification of Caribbean popular culture has limited the extent to which women' sexual play in Carnival can be seen to be emancipated or resistive (2000: 90)

McAllister and Decarvalho writing on this issue says:

“Business have not shied away from sexualizing women's bodies as a means of attracting a heterosexual male audience...The sexy images of young attract women striking poses and modeling revealing costumes reflect normalized beauty ideals which both men and female desire” (2014: 301).

Another factor that has brought changes to Carnival structures is the migration of ethnic groups that are making Carnival more intercultural. One of the ways in which the change is felt is in the change in the use of skimpy and shiny costumes. Carnival Calabar has experienced significant changes in structure, style, and appearance from the days of Usio Isua festival till now. Each executive governor has brought his innovation. Lewis and Pile write about Rio Carnival:

“...We believe that the subversive potential of the parade has been replaced by its eroticism. This eroticism has been facilitated by the introduction of elaborately uncostumed paraders-but especially signified by the uncostuming of the female body” (2000: 26).

This speaks to the changes that have been made in costumes of paraders over the years. The un-costuming of paraders has been introduced in the Carnival Calabar international parade where some groups come topless. It is no more news that the Carnival Calabar band players' costumes are decreasing in apparel.Carnival Calabar is copying the Bikini Mas of Rio and Trinidad. The images of scantily dressed women fuel the desire stereotypical male sexual fantasy. There are many especially males that have counter-arguments, they opine that the whole argument of objectifying women is a product of using foreign European aesthetics to value African expression of beauty, indigenous cultural aesthetics promote nudity. Perhaps, these males should go back in time and live like their ancestors, letting go of modern technology, and education. It is worthy to note that the middle class (male elites and few women), as well as politicians, control Carnival Calabar events, and Carnival Calabar reflects their values, beliefs, and interest. Bodies- "Carnival bodies” especially of females are symbols that represent Carnival, these portrayals maintain the patriarchal status quo. The questions that come to mind are; Is Carnival Calabar really a reflection of our cultural values? what are the real objectives of this Carnival? what are the power relations?

9 Recommendations
• It is recommended that Carnival Calabar develops its own brand of Carnival without following the Caribbean and other nations' model which one of its distinctions is parading nude female bodies
• It is recommended that more women be involved as scriptwriters, Producers, and designing and also in a position of decision making within the industry to influence the messages of women portrayed in Carnival Calabar.
• Carnival Calabar content should portray women positively and constructively and a wider variety of roles.
• Increase the use of male models for Carnival promotions, for females use diverse body sizes not to use the 'Agbani' type which reinforces certain beauty ideals that are associated with whites.
• We do not need to use topless bodies inviting us to Carnivals–These practices only reinforce the objectification and commodification of women.
• Carnival media and adverts can capture poses of women that do not emphasize sexualized images
• Costumes in Carnival Calabar should promote homegrown products-new brands to be found.
• Cross River State Carnival commission needs strategic policies that guide, structure, the aesthetic, and organization of the carnival.
• More bands from citizens should be allowed to play so it does not look like carnival producers are only a privileged few.

10 CONCLUSION
The prevalent use of female bodies by Carnival Calabar leaders to promote their bands is significant to the image of Carnival Calabar. Women's faces and bodies are often the first visual representations of the festival and its events (put on websites and promotional materials). The increasing female participation in Carnival is indicative of women occupying traditional spaces and stepping into male domains. Many carnival producers are taking advantage of women and exploiting their bodies. Many young people interviewed agreed that the representation of females in Carnival Calabar is not very favorable and a stereotype of women as property, an object formed and it is also giving the wrong pictures about indigenous Calabar women. The Arts and Media play an important role in shaping society, influencing perception, promoting progress reforms, or hampering it (Bell 2008; Pooja 2018). Therefore, Carnival being a major artistic event needs to break up stereotypes that portray women in sex roles and not affirm it. Feminity and masculinity are cultural and social constructs by family, community, education, public, media, and the arts. Denise Dunnung says “We need to reflect on how far women have come and the path forward. Women are now agents of change, playing an increasing role in the path for social, gender, and racial justice (Pooja-Sindwani 2016). In this respect, the long-term change in women's images in the arts and media will help change the negative perceptions and stereotypes women face in society.

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