WHO IS GAZING AT ME AND FOR HOW LONG?
THE DEBATE CONTINUES ON THE USE AND ABUSE OF FEMALE
SEXUALITY IN MARKETING

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ABSTRACT
The application of female sexuality in marketing undoubtedly succeeds in capturing
attention; one may question whether evaluative reactions are favorable among different
segments of the consumers. Female sexuality in marketing is the use of sexual content as
a tool for persuading the customers and to draw attention to a particular item for
consumption and it is considered one of the most influential tools of marketers and
especially advertisers. The positive or negative reactions of women to sexual appeals in
marketing practices which arises from the abuse of female sexuality in marketing. This
study has the following objectives: To proffer suggestion on how best to apply female
sexuality in marketing. To give opinion on how to avoid the negativities that will arise
relative to the use and or abuse of female sexuality in marketing. This research work will
educate our young women on the cultural negativities, social and moral negativities of
female sexuality in marketing. From the findings of this research, the researcher gave the
following recommendations: Marketing processes should contain sexuality to a limit that
will attract and convince the consumers on patronizing the product. Explicit use of sexual
appeal in the marketing of some products should be done away by all firms.

Key words: explicit, nudity, implicit, attractiveness, feminine appeal

Introduction
Sex appeal has been utilized in advertising since its beginning. The earliest forms are
wood carving and illustrations of attractive women, often unclothed from the waist up,
adorned posters, signs, and ads for saloons, tonics, and tobacco. In several notable cases
sex in advertising has been claimed as the reason for increased consumer interest and
sales. The earliest known use of sex in advertising is by the Pearl Tobacco brand in 1871,
which featured a naked maiden on the package cover. In 1885, W. Duke & Son inserted
trading cards into cigarette packs that featured sexually provocative starlets. Duke grew
to become the leading cigarette brand by 1890, (Ambady, et al. 2000). Woodbury’s Facial
Soap, soap, a woman’s beauty bar, was almost discontinued in 1910. The soap’s sales
decline was reversed, however, with ads containing images of romantic couples and
promises of love and intimacy for those using the brand (Storr, 2003). Jovan Musk Oil,
introduced in 1971, was promoted with sexual entendre and descriptions of the fragrance’s sexual attraction properties. As a result, Jovan, Inc’s revenue grew from $1.5 million in 1971 to $77 million by 1978. (Campbell & Kirmani, 2008).

The use of sexual appeal in advertising can be highly overt or extremely subtle. It ranges from relatively explicit displays of sexual acts, to the use of basic cosmetics to enhance attractive features. Over the past four decades the use of increasingly explicit sexual imagery in consumer-oriented print advertising has become almost commonplace. Sexuality is considered one of the most powerful tools of marketing and particularly Advertising, (Reichert & Lambrane, 2003). Post-advertising sales response studies have shown it can be very effective for attracting immediate interest, holding that interest, and in the context of that interest, introducing a product that somehow correlates that interest.

Women are no longer subjects in the media. They have become objects of attraction used in various media and in marketing for selling certain’s merchandise like real estate and in banking industry. The media are transmitting prejudices about womanhood and sexuality. Women are becoming degraded and invisible in such a world, hungry for new sensations and ever-newer stimulations. Although the gentler sex has a right to adequate representation and presentation in public, it is evident that classical stereotype regarding the way in which women are presented in the media i.e. advertising, are predominant in today’s society. It seems that this phenomenon has gained currency in our own midst in recent years, amidst a general devaluation of all ethical values. This comes down to what Kart said when he contemplated the individual’s view of the other that in all their actions people should look at each other as goals rather than as means. To be sure, there are different ways in which we treat others, sometimes even as means, which is how the business world, to a large extent operates. However, to think about others solely with the goal of potential sale and accept that their rational freedom might become a way to earn money means to label them and strip them of humanity and dignity, (Bonyton, 2003; McNair, 1995; Richmund & Hartman, 1982).

In an effort to cut through the tremendous clutter that exists in today’s marketing, marketers have resorted to increasingly radical tactics to capture consumer attention. One such popular tactic uses explicit sexual images in advertising even when the sexual image has little to the advertised product. For example, an advertisement for Gucci featured a woman with her public hair cropped in the shape of a ‘G’ and a man kneeling before her. Although the gratuitous use of sex in marketing undoubtedly succeeds in capturing attention, one may question whether evaluative reactions are favorable among different segments of consumers, (Whipple, 1985; Storr, 2003; Sengupta & Darren, 2008). Female sexuality in marketing is the use of sexual content as a tool for persuading the customer and to draw attention to a particular item for consumption and it is considered one of the most influential tools of marketers and especially advertisers. During the last century, the view towards female sexuality has altered due to information and politics. According to McNair (1995), sex was not as common in marketing during the early twentieth century as it is today. But over the past one hundred years the human body has been exported in marketing and it has been provocatively used to sell products. Marketing research reveals that sexuality in marketing are often attention getting,
arousing, inducing and memorable. The use of nudity and partially nude models has increased during the recent years and this sort of advertising is more common now than ever.

Thus, through the use of subtle methods that touches the cognitive, emotional, affective and action component, even stronger spirits can be influenced to think or do what the communicator wants, without being aware of it. Five words that you put together are sufficient to, in the space of only a few weeks or months, totally change the way of life of half a million consumers. Under the pressure of messages and symbols that are sent to them deliberately, systematically and in a controlled way by some industrial, commercial or political group, people buy merchandise they do not need or act politically in accordance with that group’s expectations – under the sweet delusion that they are making their choices freely and in their own interest, (Richmund & Hartman, 1982; Reichert & Lambaise, 2003).

Media manipulations are most often done out of economic or political reasons – in order to suggest to consumers the need to buy certain merchandise or services i.e. in order to present the interests of some individual, social group or political party as the interests of all the members of society. If in the process of living, each household is able to provide all its needs in independently for survival, there will be no need for exchange. In addition, if there is no exchange, then there will be no need for a market arises when there is need for exchange. The existence of markets is therefore the result of the inability of households, firms and nations to satisfy their needs and wants independently, (Simon, 1996; Radner, 1995).

The market is therefore made up of people whose desire to satisfy their needs are backed up with requisite purchasing power and the willingness to buy and consumer goods and services of their choice. Today’s marketplace which is characterized by intense competition, forces of globalization, improved and Integrated Communication Technology (ICT), enhanced infrastructural facilities, demands that marketing would play the role of a forerunner and waiter.

Marketing is the most visible, important and dynamic aspect of a business. It is the academic discipline required to understand customers’ needs and the benefit they seek. Marketing consists of individuals and organizational activities designed to sense and serve the customers’ needs and to facilitate and expedite exchanges, with the view to achieving the goals of the individual or organization through the satisfaction of the customers’ needs. Marketing is a total system of business activity designed to plan, price, promote and distribute want satisfying products to target markets to achieve organization objectives, (Whipple, 1985; Stoller, 1999).

Against the backdrop of the pornographication of mainstream media and the emergence of a more heavily sexualized culture, women are increasingly targeted as sexual consumers. One indication as sexual consumers can be glimpsed in the changing significance of the rabbit. Traditionally, the rabbit is a symbol of sexual appetite – Albeit in relation to reproduction – the rabbit became a fitting sign of the sexual revolution in the form of the playboy bunny girl where it signified sexual pleasure, recreation and consumerism for men, (Heckler, et al. 2001; Sengupta & Darren, 2008)
The problems this paper is contending with, consist of: the negative reactions of female consumers to sexual appeals in marketing; how the use of sexual appeal in marketing has been abused over the years; to identify the best way in which female sexuality can be utilized in marketing without offending any section of the consumers; the possible loss and erosion of goodwill by customers as a result of the abuse of female sexuality.

This study aims at proffering suggestions on how best to apply female sexuality in marketing; to opine on how to avoid the negative backlash that will arise relative to the use and, or abuse of female sexuality in marketing. The paper also intends to enlighten marketing organizations and the likes, who intend to use female sexuality-models, pictures, curved images or personal selling in marketing their product what they stand to gain; and to advise against the explicit use of sexual appeals in marketing of products and, or services.

**Theoretical Framework**

Definitions of sexual content in marketing are numerous. Some authors define it as marketing with sexual content and assign sexual meaning, while others describe it as sexuality in the form of nudity and sexual images with a double meaning, used as a means of marketing various products. Marketers seek to attract attention and create cognition about their brand name among carefully chosen target groups, in that way, they also seek to strengthen or modify consumer views, perceptions, beliefs and ultimate behavior in relation to the brand, (Whipple, 1985; Stoller, 1999).

Sengupta and Dahl, (2008) examined non-deliberative reactions to the use of sex in marketing. Men and women in these experiments were placed under high cognitive load while viewing an advertisement (ad) that featured explicit sexual image or a non-sexual image. Men preferred the advertisement featuring sexual image, whereas women reported significant worse attitudes towards the explicit sexual ad compared with the non-sexual adverts. Hence, women in particular dislike the use of sex in marketing, an effect that is most prominent under constrained processing conditions. Sengupta and Dahl (2008), interpreted this finding as reflecting a lower average sex drive among women compared to men.

Heckler, (2001), Sengupta & Darren, (2008) opined that sex was not as common in marketing during the early twentieth century as it is today. But over the past one hundred years, the human body has been exploited in marketing and it has been provocatively used to sell products. However, during the last century the view towards sexuality has altered due to information and politics. Heckler, Jackson and Reichert (2001), are of the opinion that the use of nudity and partially nude models has increased during the recent years and this sort of marketing is more common now than ever.

Reichert and Lambaise, (2003) suggest another definition of sexuality in marketing, if these four characteristics are present: physical features of models such as clothing, physique and general attractiveness; behavior/movement, contextual features such as camera effects, and intimacy between models.

Radner, (1995) and Simon, (1996) had it that during the past two decades, the use of sexual appeal in marketing has become more or less commonplace. The existence of
sexual appeals in marketing is prevalent in many parts of the world and it is often promoted in terms of fulfilling erotic fantasies. A review of existing research suggests complex relationships between the use of nudity in marketing and several measurements of marketing effectiveness. Research on the use of nudity in marketing, as marketing appeal indicates that although nudity may increase attention; it may decrease the attraction towards the brand name.

McNair, (1995) and Delamater, (1987) opined that sex plays three major roles in marketing, firstly, sexual materials acts as an initial attention lure and retain awareness for a longer period, often by featuring attractive models in challenging poses. Secondly, potential role is to improve recall of message points. Sexual appeals create drastically better recall when marketing programme has a suitable relationship with the products/services. Furthermore, a third role performed by sexual content in marketing is to evoke emotional responses, such as feelings of arousal and even lust. These reactions can boost marketing persuasive impact; with the opposite effects that marketing elicits negative feelings such as embarrassment, disgust or uneasiness.

Typology of Female in Marketing

Although the typologies of women in marketing are quite numerous, most of the domestic marketing managers rely on the typology of women’s personality offered by Bolen, 1984), combining Greek mythology and the study of archetypes. He describes seven (7) types of women, naming them after goddesses from ancient Greek myths. On the other hand, marketing managers promote the following three: ‘WOMAN-CHILD’ ‘WOMAN-FEMALE’ ‘WOMAN-MOTHER’.

The first type is based on advertising messages in which one girl is jealous for example, of the softness of the towels being used by her friend, or on ads in which a newly matured teenager goes on her first date intoxicated with the smell of the newest fabric softener-WOMAN-CHILD.

The second type has numerous subtypes, which mainly assume an emancipated housewife – one who is pretty and well-kept, but at the same time maximally devoted to her household. This type of woman is recognized by the fact that she seduces men by spreading out her shining white laundry, additionally seduces the already seduced ‘male’ by awaiting him naked with a bowl of instant mashed potatoes or by bringing the ‘poor’ male, already exhausted by all-night work, a cup of hot aromatic coffee-WOMAN-FEMALE.

The third type, ‘WOMAN-MOTHER’, is perhaps the most varied, encompassing mothers-in-law who have no faith in their daughter-in-law’s all-powerful dishwashing detergent; elderly mothers who insist on convincing their daughters that they are ‘always poor and alone’; young mothers who forgive their offspring the worst transgressions because they have a bag of detergent that washes away all the stains on their socks.

The Self-Made Woman
The struggle over sexual styles and their significance to marketing addressed to women is interestingly because of the way it exposes changing and competing notions of appropriate sexual taste in relation to both gender and class norms. McNair, (1995) and Winship, (2000) had it that the marketplace packaging of sex is associated with men, working class traditions and shoddy goods. The new woman he hopes to address is largely constructed in opposition to these traditions. She is not what they are, her world is feminine, classy and the product she chooses equals her taste and quality. Interestingly, this negotiation of sexual styles is apparent across the range of brands.

Delamater, (1987) observed that the wrestling back of sex into the realm of style may be seen as a process of domesticating sex by making it familiar and feminine. Similarly domesticating process in her discussion of porn and fashion representations of women’s bodies. Although superficially very similar, she argues that where the porn body connotes openness for and availability to men, the use of fashion codes works to re-signify the female body as emblematic of self-possession, even when naked and on display. In this way the ideal body type in women’s media allows women’s bodies to signify ‘confident, self-engrossed narcissism’. The image of the beautiful, sexy body thus becomes a sign of confident of the feminine self.

Hargreares, (2006) also notes that the narcissistic reproduction of feminists through contemporary beauty and fitness regimes can work to marginalize male demands through a focus on independence and consumerism. Rather than performing for a male gaze, self-fashioning may provide women with a culturally approved way of producing themselves for themselves. Radner, (1995) notes that this form of construction produces a moment of gloriousness, an interesting observation when applied to the use of self-fashioning codes in sexual consumerism. It might be argued that in this sphere, the achievement of the self-fashioned, self-possessed body becomes, or replaces the moment of sexual climax.

Simon, (1996) has it that the making over of sex is not primarily or straight forwardly about the accommodation of male sexuality, but about the formulation of women’s sexual pleasure as a kind of feminine auto-eroticism. This is particularly post-modern and new-liberal construction of sexuality that echoes a broader contemporary preoccupation with the creation of ‘the self for itself’. It is also a variant of the contemporary construction of sex as a form of recreational pleasure rather than a mechanism of reproduction or relationship. This post-modern takes on sex as augmented by an articulation of a post-feminist sexuality in which the key sign is masturbation as a symbol of active female sexuality, combined with the narcissistic and consumerist practices of self-fashioning. In this sense, dressing up and playing by oneself is refigured as a form of recreation for women and as a way of producing post-feminist. This is not only ‘the self for itself’ of post-modernism, but particularly consumerist and narcissistic production of feminist – herself for herself.

Bonyton, (2003) the form of production in which women become ‘self-made’ is apparent across contemporary culture, not only in fashion and beauty discourses, but in the increasingly visible and important genre of self-help. This genre of self-help works to produce a contemporary ideal of a ‘no-needs modern woman’ a woman who survives
without support from others, and who is engaged in the production, regulation and care of
her own self. This process of making the self through self-care is particularly apparent in
the way a variety of health, therapeutic, sexual, fashion and beauty practices are now
loosely linked under the category of pampering, an activity generally promoted as a
positive form of self-indulgence, pleasure and of holistic self-care in which mind, body
and spirit are revived and reworked.
Stoller, (1999) argued that the marketing of sex products to women draws on a range of
discourses in a way that can be described as post-modern. Sex is constructed as a form of
self-pleasure and self-fashioning. There is an emphasis on the individual as the creator of
her own significance, status, and experience, and on the need to make these culturally
visible and meaningful through the manipulation of appropriate consumer goods. The
extent to which sex is constructed for women in relational or recreational terms in this
area of consumption is a key point and one that journalists, academics and individual
women continue to struggle over. To what extent are new sexual discourses about the re-
inscription of female desire within conventional patriarchal frames of reference and to
what extent do they disturb these? What kind of price are women prepared to pay for
their moments of self-possessed feminine ‘gloriousness’? how can we mobilize the
second wave feminist concern about the dangers of sex alongside a third wave emphasis
on pleasure and an insistence that we should become sexual adventurers who don’t dare
to assume that we know what ‘female sexuality’ is all about?

Research Methodology
This paper is conceptual in nature and relied heavily on extant literature, with intersperse
of personal commentary. In an attempt to address the “USE” and “ABUSE” of sexual
appeal in marketing, extant literature were reviewed and synthesized in a comparative
study of the two perspectives-the “use” and “abuse”. Contentious debates by notable
marketing and sociology scholars are discussed enabling a conceptual clarity for better
understanding. The study is conceptual, with intersperse of personal commentaries based
on field experience. Qualitative research paradigm is adopted, using content analysis and
thematic analysis techniques for data analysis.
Discussions

Sexual Content in Marketing

Definitions of sexual content in marketing are also numerous. Some authors define it as marketing with a sexual-informative content and assigned sexual meaning, while others describe it as sexuality in the form of nudity and sexual images with a double meaning, used as a means of marketing various products/services.

Criticism within the framework of social anthropology regarding the inadequate approach to women in fact represents a part of a broader critique of sexism in the social construction of gender and are either neglected or the subject of conformist judgments regarding the ‘eternal’ characteristics and positions of the genders. Sexism in science represents a specific variety of gender segregation, through which men’s interests and activities are more clearly announced, recognized and seen and thus, thanks to the dominant patriarchal value system, ‘great importance and prestige is assigned to male roles in comparison to female roles’, (Ambady, et al. 2000; Whipple, 1985).

In the science of anthropology thus far, the woman’s differentness has been interpreted as her historic natural essence. The stubborn claim, frequently found in many theories, that the essence of woman is ‘unchangeable’, leaves aside the fact that, in most known societies, the woman occupies a place that does not overstep the bounds of her reproductive role. That is not surprising as until recently, the male anthropologist has been the exclusive subject making observations and conclusions about women, (Bolen, 1984; Stoller, 1999; McNair, 1995).

Sexual content is one of the most efficient ways of attracting the attention of a target audience. Since sex is one of the most important motivational factors, it is clear that its motivational persuasive character is great with these two elements, sexual content gives marketing effectiveness. Especially in recent times, sex has been used more and more frequently and freely in media messages, which is why it should be separately researched as a powerful means of persuasion and the good and the bad sides of its use learned, so that the measure of good taste in the advertising process can be set in the best possible way.

In contemporary consumer advertising as well, sexual content is used in newspapers, magazines and on ordinary and cable television in promotional messages for an ever-expanding array of products. There are more ads with provocative pictures of women wearing clothing that reveals more than it hides and assuming provocative poses that sell clothing, perfume, beauty products, alcohol, automobiles etc. Brands such as “Calvin Klein” “Victoria’s Secret” and “Pepsi” use such sexual images in order to create an omnipresent sexually advert media exposure, (Storr, 2003; Whipple, 1985).

Sexual information in advertising can be associated with a persuasive message to a greater or a lesser degree. For example, sexual content can be used only to the extent necessary to draw attention to a product, which is classified as low level association. However, despite this low-level association, when it comes to abuse of the female body, this particular form of abuse may be even more egregious than with higher-level associations, like in the example of the naked woman who, besides already being
associated with a car is also pregnant, (Reichert & Lambaise, 2003; Richmund & Hartman, 1982).

However, if sexual information is an integral part of the advertising message itself, then we are talking about a high level association. A good example is a passionately embarrassing pair. The woman’s eyes are closed as she kisses a man from whose face the fragrance escape is evaporating. The ad’s message no matter how true its argument, is that the use of this fragrance results in an (implied) sexual outcome. According to the maker of the fragrance, the sexual information is inseparable from the persuasive message. To men, as the target audience, this advertisement is saying that the use of the fragrance will increase their chances of experiencing the outcome shown in the advertisement, (Stoller, 1999).

Sexual behavior also includes interaction between two or more people. Similar to erotica or soft pornography, consumers are attracted to images of sexual behavior or contact between others such as kissing, embracing, petting, simulated oral or coital sex, strip tease and voyeurism.

An overview of surveys (Whipple, 1985; Storr, 2003; Hargreas, 2006), of print and television advertising content identified the following common forms of sexual content in the promotion and marketing of products, services and ideas: depiction of the body (nudity), physical attractiveness, suggestive behavior, interaction and other factors such as scenery (location), content and camera effects. In addition, depictions of the body were in the first-place in terms of use in marketing. Also, frequently referred to as nudity, this form of sexual content more precisely refers to the amount and style of clothing worn by the models. Provocative clothing includes women in short skirts, undergarments and low-cut blouses and men in tight jeans or underwear, or without a shirt. Despite the term nudity, genitals are very rarely shown in ads. Although images of women’s breast most often with covered nipples are used. All in all, very attractive models are employed, wearing clothing that primarily emphasizes the beauty of their bodies.

**Gender Differences in Sexual Motivations**

Extant literature (Bolen, 1984; Radner, 1995; Simon, 1996; Sengupta & Darren, 2008), in sexual psychology posits an important difference in gender orientations towards sex that is particularly germane to the current analysis. Delamater, (1987) argues that men and women have different beliefs about the purpose of sexual activity and concomitant motivation for engaging in it. Men tend to adopt a relatively recreational orientation, an approach that emphasizes physical gratification and views sex as an end in itself. In contrast, women tend to adopt a relationship-based orientation to sexuality, as approach that emphasizes the importance of intimacy and commitment in a sexual relationship.

Sengupta and Darren, (2008) has it that women and men have different motives regarding sex. Briefly, an evolutionary view of sexual motives is based on the model of differential parental investment, which argues that because females in the human species must invest far greater resources to produce offspring than do men, they tend to be correspondingly more selective in their choice of sexual partners. Rather than engaging in casual sex with a large number of men, women select mates who are likely to commit long-term
resources to help with the nurturing of offspring. Men, on the other hand, benefit reproductively by taking advantage of opportunities to engage in sexual intercourses with a large number of women with little regard to long-term consequences. This account, thus argues that evolution has produced an urge toward casual, non-invested sex in men but an aversion to casual, non-invested sex in women.

Reichert and Lambaise, (2003) suggested a socialization-based account arrived at a similar conclusion, but from a different perspective. Socialization influences are almost without exception biased toward promoting a recreational attitude towards sex in men but a relationship orientation in woman. For instance sexual behaviors that are primarily linked with physical gratification (masturbation) are subjected to more parental discouragement and condemnation for daughters than sons. Similarly, peers tend to reinforce men’s focus on the recreational aspects of sexual affairs whereas women’s peers offer reinforcement when sexual episodes are framed in the context of an emotionally intimate relationship.

Investigating Sexual Consumerism

A brief look at some of the websites where sexual products are sold to women demonstrate that there is a recurring set of elements which can be taken as indications of a post-feminist address to women as mainstream sexual consumers. In particular, it is notable that the overwhelming emphasis is on sex toys and lingerie’s. Heller, (2002) writes that across the sites there is a notable attempts to distance sexual products from the representation of sex as dirty, particularly styles include sex as a naughty laugh grown up and sophisticated feminist or a more youthful, funky androgyny. It is possible to situate these styles in relation to brands such as fashion labels or to popular genres, such as women’s magazines, fashion journalism and sex advice. The funkier and more youthful the style, the less attempt there is at justification or reassurance, which may suggest that the marketing of products to younger women depends on an understanding that sex is cool and on an acceptance of women’s sexual pleasure. However, it is interesting that the sites employing this style tend towards a form of androgyny that could be interpreted as sanitizing sex – ‘stick figures’ rather than real bodies, references to design rather than sex.

There are a number of ways of taking this discussion forward. One might extend the focus on the discourse used to construct what sex is, what it becomes in contemporary cultures. Here, for example female sexuality appears to function as a form of self-imaging, a type of self-pleasuring that is both inner and outer directed. It is clearly bound up with the consumption of commodities. It is a kind of auto-eroticism. It is a form of health and self development. For some critics, what is happening here is a process in which sex is being de-sexualized in order to construct an address to woman. It would be useful to investigate how constructions of sex for women compare to the ways in which sex is materialized for men, and to what extent the projection of an independent, narcissistic and hedonistic sexuality relates to structures of gender, (Ramírez and Reichert, 2000).
It would be instructive to ask how the marketing of sex products might be envisaged as a form of dialogue between and about women and female sexuality. As our culture becomes more increasingly sexualized, sexual discourse becomes more visible. He notes that this sexualization has frequently tended to operate through forms of ‘in-your-face advertising’ aimed at affluent young women. Where sexual imagery such as the ‘hello boys and opium’ campaigns may have operated within women’s media as a form of private dialogue with women, their movement to billboards in the outdoors, in public space, rendered this dialogue rather more public. The significance of the imagery was influenced by this change of context, making sexual discourse much more visibly a form of public discourse – a movement that makes it much more important that women take part in it. As marketing of sex products continues to flourish and becomes part of the public dialogue about sexuality, it will be increasingly necessary for women to be involved in the conversation about what they want and what it is really all for, (Winship, 2000).

**Use of Sex in Marketing**

This focuses on the use of sexual images, wooden curves, nude pictures and suggestive behaviours in marketing, which is defined as the use of a sexual image that is unnecessarily explicit to promote and market a product, service or idea. Research in this area suggests that consumers respond negatively by women and positively by men to this type of marketing because the explicit use of sex is viewed as unethical by some and normal by others.

Campbell and Kirmani, (2000) posited that although the premise that gratuitous sexual appeals produce negative reactions because of perceptions of unethical and manipulative practices is straightforward and logical, it also presupposes a deliberative, cognitive mechanism. Yet consumers typically spend little time and effort when viewing an advert. It is important, therefore, to understand reactions to inappropriate sex appeals under ‘thin slice’ processing, such as when consumers view adverts under constrained cognitive capacity.

Sengupta and Dahl, (2008) examined non-deliberative reactions to the gratuitous use of sex in advertising. Men and women in these experiments were placed under high cognitive load while viewing an advert that featured an explicit sexual image or a non-sexual image. Unlike previous research that had found that both men and women dislike the gratuitous use of sex in marketing, a gender difference emerged under constrained conditions: men far preferred the adverts featuring the sexual image (compared to the non-sexual image) whereas women reported significant worse attitudes towards the explicit sexual adverts as compared with the non-sexual adverts. Hence, women in particular dislike the gratuitous use of sex in marketing, an effect that is most prominent under constrained processing conditions. Sengupta and Dahl, (2008) interpreted this finding as reflecting a lower average sex drive among women compared to men.

**Effects of Sexual Content in Marketing**
Does sexual information in marketing have any effect? Are marketing activities with sexual content more patronized than others? Are these marketing activities more attractive than others? Are they easily remembered than other adverts? These questions are connected to one overall question which is; Does sexuality in marketing help or harm the marketing process? If the answer to these questions are positive, that would mean that marketing process with sexual content are more convincing and result in more transactions.

Researchers, (Heller, 2000; Radner, 1995; Sengupta & Darren, 2008; Ramirez & Reichert, 2000; Reichert & Lambaise, 2003) are generally in agreement that sexual information in marketing is noticed and patronized. Still the attention directed towards sexual content may produce a counter-productive distraction. Sexual images attract the viewers’ attention, leaving little free capacity for processing the remaining information contained in the advert. As a consequence, brand information-reasons for purchasing the brand, the brand name itself, sponsorship-is not processed to the same degree. Thus the understandable conclusion of numerous surveys, that when sexual information is integrated into the massage, the massage is more likely to be processed. On the other hand, if sex is used superficially, in an abusing way, and without a clear connection to the message, the distraction effect will be pronounced, as will the negative financial effects. The general assumption is that the obstacles that prevent consumers from accessing, interpreting and saving information in their memory will prematurely interrupt the process of persuasion. If for example, sexual content diverts the viewers from processing a message, then the use of sex is counter-productive and should be avoided. The information-processing approach assumes a rational model of consumer behavior.

Conlusion
The use of female sexuality in marketing processes has in the recent years taken the whole stream of the marketing activities. Marketers of all firms, whether product-oriented or service-oriented, do not fail to apply sexual contents in their marketing process due to this fact that the only way to make a consumer buy more or remain loyal is giving the consumer what he/she wants by offering products which will appeal to their emotions. The use of female sexuality in marketing appeals to the emotion of customers which will convince and motivate them to purchase and assists afterwards remember the products and/or services.

The use of female sexuality both in marketing and in advertising is advisable to a limit because while applying sexuality in the marketing process, the marketer should remember the cultural and moral effects of explicit application of sexual appeal. Explicit sexual appeal in marketing causes the consumer to develop a negative perception about the product and the messages thereof thereby abandoning and not patronizing.

In a nutshell, the use of female sexuality in marketing is now the strategy adopted by every marketer in other to meet up with the competition in the market where as some
marketers fail to control theirs and making use of explicit sexual content in their marketing process.

In the content of marketing, there is convincing proof that sexual information attracts attention. This attention can be viewed, i.e. defined as an orientation reaction, an involuntary devotion of focused attention. In some marketing processes with sexual content, it can engage, occupy and interests consumers more than those that are asexual.

Also, there is evidence, gained by the measuring of visual recognition and recall that attention is directed precisely at the sexual information in a marketing process. For example, the recognition of sexual visual elements in a spot-curved images, decorative pictures of women-is significantly higher than in similar ads without sexual images. Emotional reactions caused by sexual information play an important role in the applied content of sex in marketing. Sex causes general excitement, and depending on a number of variables, such as context, prevailing tome and respondent characteristics, causes positive or negative emotional reactions to sexual information that serves to attract the attention that might influence attitudes toward the brand and influence buying intent. In the context of advertising, persuasion can be influenced by affective reactions and reactions based on excitement which serve to create a general motivation toward the stimulus as measured through buying intent.

Other variables that most affect the processing and evaluation outcomes of sexual content in marketing are product relevance, respondent gender and respondent personality. Relevance, the degree of strength of connection between product category and use of sexual content is an important variable that should be studied further. In most studies, sex is generally tested for only sex-related product categories or those for which sex is generally used as a sales strategy. For example, brand name jeans, fragrances, home movies, alcoholic beverages, cigarettes, automobiles and sunning cosmetics. It is clear that sex is used to market some product types and not others. Browsing through magazines reveals that sexy models in provocative poses and revealing clothing (nudity) can be found in marketing of perfumes, branded clothing and accessories (women’s purses, leather goods, scarves, hat etc), cosmetics products, health products, tobacco and alcoholic beverages, and very rarely or never in marketing for financial services, medicine or home computers.

The findings of this research work shows that the relevance of sexual content to the product type can influence the evaluation of brands and producers. As for product relevance, the conclusion is; the greater the connection between sexual content and the product, the more favorable the evaluation. It should be noted that these findings are unambiguous but in order to strengthen the generalization, new research using a larger number of products should be conducted.
Recommendations
On the premises of the above discussions following recommendations becomes necessary:

i. Marketing processes should contain sexuality to a limit which will attract and convince the consumers on patronizing the product.

ii. Explicit use of sexual appeal in the marketing of some products should be done away by some firms who indulge in explicit use of sexual content.

iii. The customers who are the target of this sexual appeal should look unto the product and not evaluating themselves with those models in the marketing (highly attractive models in advertisement).

iv. Firms should know the products in which they will apply sexual appeals because not every product needs sexual content for it to sale.

v. There should be regulation on how sexual appeal is used in marketing of products so as not to interfere with the social, cultural and moral lives of the consumers.

References


