

Original Paper

A Semiological Study of Internet Memes of Men Dance Competition on Tiv Popular Culture in Benue State, Nigeria

Mainasara Yakubu Kurfi¹ & Aondover Eric Msughter²

¹ PhD, Department of Mass Communication, Bayero University, Kano, Nigeria. E-mail: mykurfi@gmail.com

² PhD student, Department of Mass Communication, Bayero University, Kano, Nigeria. E-mail: Aondover7@gmail.com

Abstract

The main preoccupation of the social media is the creation and production of symbolic messages which are transmitted to the public for the purpose of fulfilling certain functions to the society in general as well as individuals within the society. Therefore, popular music has been known to perform some journalistic roles in Nigeria and to reach audiences that the conventional media have not had the opportunity of reaching. Drawing from this perspective, the study analyse contextual background of internet memes of men dance competition in Benue State. It also study formal description of the internet memes of men dance competition and examine iconographic of the internet memes of men dance competition in the state. The study espouses on the Cultural Populism Theory and Visual Rhetoric Theory. The study adopts Semiotic Analysis (SA) and Text and Textual Analysis (TTA). The population for this study comprises 21 social media that shared pictures of men dance competition in the state. Facebook, Instagram and Twitter constitute the sample size of the study. Five pictures are analysed for this study, however, three pictures are presented in this report, for depth qualitative analysis. The study employs purposive sampling technique in the selection of the social media and pictures for analysis. The study discovered that visual imageries are used symbolically on social media to show the weakness of men in dance competition in Benue State. The findings of the study also revealed that the role of men in cultural promotion on the Tiv popular culture in the state is significantly high. The study concludes that men in the state dance very well and have a unique form of advancing Tiv popular culture.

Keywords: Contextual background, formal description, iconographic analysis, Internet memes, men dance and Tiv culture

1. Introduction

Semiotics or Semiology is the study of signs that seeks to know how meaning is possible by examining the conditions which allow language and meaning to arise in the first place (Kurfi, 2019). It thus assists in the process of communication. Although early communities had signifying systems, Swiss linguist Ferdinand de Saussure (1857-1913) and American philosopher Charles Sanders Peirce (1839-1914) are considered to be the founding fathers of modern semiotics. Interpreters of the theories of these two founding fathers include Roman Jakobson, Roland Barthes, Umberto Eco, Mikhail Bakhtin, Olu Obafemi, Ropo Sekoni, Victoria Alabi, and many others. A sign is therefore something that stands for something else. It could be an object, a picture, a word, gesture, or mark. Semiotics is thus useful for both verbal and non-verbal communication (Justin, 2016). A sign suggests the presence or existence of a fact, condition or quality immediately evident, so long as it is used to convey meaning. Semiotics encompasses kinesics, proxemics, pragmatics, and all forms of communication. Relatedly, text and textual analysis focuses on media content as far as text and textual analysis is concerned. TTA involves applying form of textual analysis to a series of printed, visual or audio text. In text and textual analysis method, researchers tend to highlight the common codes, terms, ideologies and individual that dominates the media content (Kurfi, 2019).

Therefore, entertainments come in many forms and have always helped to shape societies. Tradition forms of entertainment which constitute part of what Ugboajah in Esan (2019) classified as *Oramedia* have often transited successfully into mass media. McQuail (2010) notes that entertainment constitutes the largest category of media content, an observation which is arguably more accurate for television. Yet, in both traditional and contemporary realms, entertainment has had mixed fortunes in society, where a near love or hate relationship has been developed, due to the view that it is trivial; it is appreciated but deemed antithetical to High Art, not worthy of critical attention. At a time, this view appeared to cut across popular discourse, professional, and academic circles. For instance, it is customary in Africa societies to dismiss play, or entertainment, for lack of seriousness.

As Inden (2013) wrote, entertainment is an intensified form of amusement, an activity that is used to divert and please, usually consisting of images and sound attracting large audiences. For this reason and more, entertainment has not always been considered worthy of critical scrutiny, as Newcomb (2007) documents. Therefore, the main preoccupation of the mass media is the creation and production of symbolic messages, which are transmitted to the public for the purpose of fulfilling certain functions to the society in general as well as individuals within the society. Such functions, as identified by Lasswell and Wright in Azeez (2019) include surveillance of the environment, correlation of parts of society in responding to the environment, transmission of the social heritage from one generation to the next and entertainment.

As symbolic constructions, media messages have implications in pictures of meaning. Media messages, for whatever functions they are created or constructed, are imbued with meanings and power. The media, in their messages, represent certain meanings that are meant, among other things, to model certain identities and to provide certain rules, norms and conventions by which social life is ordered and governed (Hall, 2003). Media representations have, therefore, become the most potent mechanisms for producing meanings and enacting power in social relations.

Signification of meanings in the media, however, is not limited to news messages; it also plays out even in the entertainment messages. Therefore, media entertainment that might appear ordinary as mechanisms for relaxation and amusement are, in fact, not totally free of ideological intentions. The visuals that dominate most media entertainment are not only symbolic; they also have forceful but underlining presence of ideological connotations. The connotative meanings that are implicitly embedded or constructed in media entertainment reflect not only the cultural assumption of the society in which they are produced; they, also, indirectly, reflect the culture within which media production is bounded. So, there is picture of visuals in the construction or production of media entertainment, which are certainly not free-floating. Media entertainment are, indeed, embedded in picture that entails social consequences, which many critical scholars have referred to as the social effects of media meanings (Hall, 2003; and Storey, 2006).

In other words, visuals in entertainment media are deliberately created to reflect the interests of certain dominant power. They clandestinely carry and convey certain ideologies that tend to legitimate imagined social power relations and dominant groups' interest or the interest of their power. Although, the visuals in media entertainment appear to reflect the reality of social world, the reality is distorted and has little or no connection with audience' real lives. Within this context, this paper examines the picture of visuals and gender ideology in the Nigeria entertainment in Benue State. It interrogates the signification of patriarchal ideology in media entertainment and its impact on men's identity and development. In doing all these, the paper examines the pictures of men dance competition as the direction of the existing literature is on women dance competition in the state. The paper also examines the power of pictures within which social media ideological connotations and stereotypes in the visual representations of men in media entertainments on men's identity on the Tiv popular culture. It then relates all the theoretical discourses to the critical analysis of how men are being visually represented in the Nigeria entertainment in general and Benue State in particular and the meaning they convey about men identity on Tiv popular culture.

1.1 Problem Statement

Walser in Ya'u and Adamu (2019) noted that only a little scholarly attention has been given to popular culture and music studies and the examination of the ways in which it lends itself to use as a means of

socio-political and cultural communication. Also, Machin and Richardson (2012) equally observed that little attention has been paid to the systematically reporting the ideas, techniques used, values, attitudes and politics communicated by songs and music. Relatedly, one important cultural belief, or what some theorists prefer to refer to as lived ideology in many societies, pertains to gender differences, with particular regard to what is considered to be the appropriate behaviour and attitudes of men and women. For example, in many societies, women are believed to be weaker and more emotional than men. This belief, invariably influences how males and females perceive themselves and their roles in society, and has the tendency to engender unbalanced power relationship between men and women.

Feminists have, therefore, over the years taken an anti-naturalist stance in explaining and understanding gender differences, and in relation to the formation of gender identities by individuals in a society. They have questioned the essentialist natural and biological determinism. For feminists, the determination and explanation of gender differences between men and women, and gender identity formation, on the basis of biological difference, points to something beyond society and beyond debate. The connection between nature and gender, essentially, ignores the social influences that are also central to the making up of gender differences and gender formation. Feminists, therefore, believe that explaining gender differences and gender identity formation as natural and fixed is misconceived. Thus, the proposition that the behaviours, capabilities and attitudes enacted by men and women in their social relationship are outcomes of social cultural values of their societies presupposes that the behaviours and attitudes are, necessarily, sustained by being transmitted from one generation to another.

Feminists have argued that the dominant definitions and meanings, which discourse, through languages and social practices, has given about femininity, are in opposition to women in basic aspects of their lives, and are meant to dominate and oppress women. They basic aspects that combine to form women's identity include their sexuality, domestic roles or positions and their participation in public sphere. There are pointers in the literature concerning women dance competition in Benue State. However, substantial studies have not been recorded on the internet memes of men dance competition on Tiv Popular culture in Benue State.

Therefore, Webster (2015) observed that picture or cartoon is a two-dimensional non-realistic or stylized drawing or painting intended for satire, caricature or humor. Cartoons are an amalgam of images (the symbols) and captions (the written word) that are simplified into a visual form and presented in an easily accessible medium of mass communication (Hosterman, 2002). This study therefore focuses on the internet memes of men dance competition on Tiv Popular culture in Benue State, Nigeria. Pictures go alongside satirical caricature and comic art and have line as principal element to differentiate women and men dance competition in the state.

1.2 Purpose and Objectives of the Study

The purpose of the research is to carry out a Semiological study of internet memes of men dance competition on Tiv popular culture in Benue State, Nigeria. To achieve this broad goal of the study, the following specific objectives are set:

1. To analyse contextual background of internet memes of men dance competition in Benue State.
2. To study formal description of the internet memes of men dance competition in Benue State.
3. To examine iconographic of the internet memes of men dance competition in Benue State.

1.3 Operational Definition of Terms

Contextual background: discusses the factors that led to the production of pictures or cartoons of men dance competition on Tiv popular culture in Benue State.

Formal description: are formal elements and the symbolic context of imageries within the social-cultural pictures or cartoons in the context of men imageries on Tiv popular culture in Benue State.

Iconographic analysis: is an art-historical method of image analysis that studies the identification, description and interpretation of the content of images; the subjects that depicted the particular compositions and details used as well as other elements that are distinct from artistic style of men.

Internet meme: is a type of meme that is used on social media like Facebook, Twitter and Instagram, which consist of image, photographs or in form of cartoons and macros with a concept or catchphrase of men dance competition on Tiv popular culture in Benue State.

Social media: these are websites and application that enable users to create and share content in form of meme on men dance competition in Benue State, like Facebook, Twitter and Instagram.

2. Literature Review

Social media have been credited with the functions of cultural promotion and entertainment. This involves dissemination of cultural and artistic products for the purpose of presenting the heritage of the past, development of culture by widening the individual's horizon, awakening his imagination and stimulating his aesthetic needs and creativity (Ya'u, 2019). The social media engage in the diffusion of culture through signs, symbols, sounds and images of drama, dance, art, music, comedy, sports and games for personal and collective recreation. Culture is seen as a communicative process in which a society not only expresses but also generates and forms its world view.

Barber in Ya'u (2019) observed that cultural anthropologists and historians agree that communication connotes culture and sociologists regard culture as the totality of the way of life of the people. Ochonogor (2013) states that culture results from learnt attributes and experiences known as nurture and it is particular to every human group. Culture as an entity teaches shapes and conditions the behaviour and attitudes of its adherents. It equally sets standards for acceptable behaviour in society and the media in this perspective play a key role for promoting these standards through their reportage. Ochonogor (2013) concludes that culture is the cumulative way and pattern of people's life, which include their beliefs, customs, norms, values, knowledge, taboos, codes, tools, works of arts, rituals, ceremonies and other related components whose development depend on man's ability and capacity to learn and transmit knowledge and experience to succeeding generations. Corroborating, Marsella in Ya'u (2019) argues that culture is shared learned behaviour which is transmitted from one generation to another for the purpose of promoting or advancing individual and societal survival, adaptations, growth and development.

Bourdieu (1983) notes that specificity of particular culture is a historical process framed by the material and social context of the actors and concludes that the reproduction of specific cultural system involves intergenerational interactions of its members in mapping previous dispositions on to the present social contact. On the aspect of popular, Bourdieu (1983) observed, is always ambiguous because it came to Africa inscribed with the history of political and cultural struggles, and has long been used pejoratively where to be popular is to be low class and to be low class is not something good. He noted that in the 20th century, the idea of mass culture, which is seen by many cultural critics as mechanically produced, has also long been focus for a probation and championship, to the point where anything produced by the people is automatically valued. Popular sovereignty and popular democracy are examples of highly charged terms that assume that what popular is.

Barber in Ya'u (2019) observed that popular culture is grounded on the notion of people as an existing demographic category and this leads to the assumption that each stratum of a society has its own distinctive culture, a way of life and a range of expressive forms, which are peculiar to it and which affirm its identity vis-à-vis the other social strata. She argued that when the concept of popular culture is transferred to Africa, it brought a history of conflicts, assumptions, and problems. She observed that the concept is more slippery and elusive in Africa than in Europe because of the vague existence of the high culture, the categorical distinction of the people and the low industrial of most African urban centres. In relation to African urban centre, Chabal (1986) argued that work force constitutes a tiny minority of urban population, unstable, differently defined groups, linguistic, ethnic, occupational and religious only thinkable as a category in that they are excluded from the privileges of the political, business and military elites.

Within this context, therefore, new kinds of association, new forms of identity and new public have been forged in Benue State. The press, the church, the school and more recently the electronic media addressed new categories of listeners and, thus, calling into existence new collectivities. New forms of entertainment; organised sports, cinema, commercial theatres have brought large number of people

together in new ways. People use each social genre to develop a culture that speaks about the conditions of their existence. This culture usually says only the things that people usually want to hear that justice will prevail and that good will be rewarded. They do not apparently want to hear escapist fantasies. These cultures express issues of pre-industrial, pre-colonial and post-colonial confusion, struggle for survival economic hardship and sexual and economic exploitation (Fabian, 1997).

Additionally, cultural scholars have not been interested in finding evidence of direct media effects on individuals. They are more interested in macroscopic question of cultural evolution the culture defining itself for itself. Thus, expressive perspective or model of communication presume a grant scale interaction between the culture, the media used to convey the culture and individual media content consumers of that culture.

2.1 Theoretical Framework

This study is anchored on the Cultural Populism Theory and Visual Rhetoric Theory. The Cultural Populism Theory is a media sociology approach to the analysis of culture in which an active audience use the media for its own purpose and, in which the pleasurable consumption of popular culture is presented as having resistive and subversive potential.

The proponents of the theory (Fiske, Bourdieu and Marvin) argue that common pattern of behaviour; attitudes and values which persist for generations are the results of cultural factors, rather than biological. Bourdieu (1977) observed that the theory assumes that there is a comprehensive education, knowledge and connections available to any individual or group that give them a head start, confer status and assist in the pursuit of power.

The theory presents activists' opposition to the ways in which dominant forces in capitalist society shape people's behaviour and ways of thinking. The theory also assumes that all structural maintenance and perpetuations of dominant values, norms and cultural forms and power relations, across generations, is contested through alternative media and challenged by an overwhelming portion of the population. The theory is criticized by McGuigan as being wholly illusory and ideological naïve. It is further contested as overplaying human agency and underplaying social images and economic factors (Chandler and Munday in Ya'u, 2019).

Relatedly, Visual Rhetoric Theory is an art of effective communication through images typography, and texts. Visual rhetoric encompasses the skill of visual literacy and the ability to analyze images for their form and meaning. Drawing from the theoretical lens of rhetorical analysis, visual rhetoric examines the structure of an image, and the consequent persuasive effects on an audience. Visual rhetoric implicates the use of images. Using images is apparent to visual rhetoric because these visuals or images help in forming the case or arguing the point that the writer formulates. Similarly visual rhetoric encompasses how people arrange segments of visual text on social media. Visual rhetoric also involves the selection of different fonts, contrastive colors, and graphs, among other elements, to shape visual rhetoric text. One of the ideas one can apply, when analyzing a visual text is to look for its significant meaning.

In the application of visual rhetoric, scholars like Msughter (2018) and Gwandu (2019) are of the view that the meaning should be deeper than the literal sense that a visual text holds. In this perspective, there is a need to dissect a visual text to understand the meaning behind the image or text. Analyzing a text that includes a photo, painting, or even cartoon of the bold eagle with additional written words, would bring to minds the conceptions of strength and freedom rather than merely a conception of a bird.

This, including an understanding of the semiotics creative and rhetorical choices made with coloring, shaping, and object placement. Visual rhetoric view images as sensory expressions of cultural and contextual meaning, as opposed to purely aesthetic consideration. Visual rhetoric has been approached and applied in a variety of academic fields including art history, linguistics, semiotics, cultural studies, business, and technical communication, speech communication, and classical rhetoric. Visual rhetoric seeks to develop rhetorical theory in a way that is more comprehensive and inclusive about images and their interpretations. Within this context, there is a nexus between the theory and the study as people often used social media platforms in Benue State to make comparison between women and men dance

using internet memes to attack men in the state.

3. Method and Materials

The study adopted Semiotic Analysis (SA) and Text and Textual Analysis (TTA). Semiotic analysis studies the signs in images used in this study in order to answer the research question based on the signs and photographic image of the internet meme. As Rose (2001, p. 69) explained, semiotics “offers a very full box of analytical tools for taking an image apart and tracing how it works in relation to broader systems of meaning”. The major strength of semiotics is that it is a sophisticated analytical tool for explaining how signs make sense (Msughter, 2020). In conducting the semiotic analysis, the study interpreted the photos by looking at the dancers’ portions, colors, angles, background settings, eyes contact, dressing, and gestures poses in the photos.

Besides the photos, the study looked at the captions accompanying the photos to read the dominant, preferred ideology of the photos. Because images can be polysemic and therefore open to interpretations, considering captions along with the photos can help a researcher to find out which signs to read, and which signs are privileged. As Barthes (1977) had argued, captions are like anchors; they help the readers to choose the correct level of perception.

The study also espouses on text and textual analysis. It relies on secondary data sources. Images or cartoons connote multiple interpretations (Jimoh, 2019). Thus, the analysis of cartoons is accomplished by iconographic analysis within the visual and social semiotic theoretical frameworks. Iconographic analysis is an art-historical method of image analysis that studies the identification, description and interpretation of the content of images; the subjects depicted the particular compositions and details used, as well as other elements that are distinct from artistic style (Van-Leeuwen, 2001). The population for this study comprises 21 social media that shared pictures of men dance competition in Benue State. Facebook, Instagram and Twitter constitute the sample size of the study. Five pictures are analysed for this study, however, three pictures are presented in this report, for depth qualitative analysis.

The purposive sampling technique was employed in the selection of the social media and pictures for analysis, with the criteria for selection being men dance themes, cartoons embedded with visual imageries and less-textual elements. These criteria are dictated by the objectives and analytical orientations of the study. Secondary analysis of data is inductive and inferences are drawn from an in-depth observation of the text and textual visual elements embedded in pictures representations within their contextual background, formal description and iconographic analysis of work. Contextual background discusses the factors that led to the production of the pictures or cartoons, formal description and iconographic analysis of work-analyses formal elements and the symbolic context of imageries within the social-cultural pictures of men dance competition in the context of their production.

4. Findings and Discussion



Internet Meme on Facebook March, 2021

Context Background

The *Swange* is a form of urban recreational dance among the Tiv in which men and women dance together. This dance uses the circle formation familiar in village dances and adapts traditional musical themes to highlife rhythms played on a combination of Tiv and Hausa instruments. In the Tiv popular culture, there is this belief that a woman's body is soft and more flexible than that of a man. Therefore, women are often valued in terms of dance and promotion of the Tiv popular culture in dance competition more than men. Men are considered to have a strong body, which can hinder them from dancing or bending the body like a woman. Factors like genetic composition of a man are significant as most people see men as a product of the father's genetic heredity, which played a vital role during dance competition (Asema, 2018). Women on the other hand are seen as a product of the mother's genetic composition and since there is this expectation that the women's body are soft, it therefore bind on the culture that women can do better during dance competition as depict in the picture above.

Formal Description

The preceding picture is a product of popular culture, considering it depiction of the ambiance created in the picture shows the extent to which a woman can bend her body. Additionally, the man could not move the body like the woman. This means that the genetic composition of men as passed on by the father is what is making the man to dance more than the man because of the flexible genetic composition of the woman as passed on by the mother as a cultural belief system in the state. As observed by Asema (2018) factors like genetic composition of a man are significant as most people see men as a product of the father's genetic heredity, which played a vital role during dance competition.

Iconographic Analysis

The rope held by two persons serves as an instrument to measure the extent a man can go in terms of moving his body and the extent a woman can move her body. The rope in the picture's composition represents a symbolic rating scale for measuring the body flexibility of a woman and a man. The position of the hands is also another iconographic disposition to examine the flexibility between the woman and the man. Therefore, the visual imageries are used symbolically on social media to show the weakness of men in dance competition in Benue State. A study by Asema (2018) also found that metaphors, proverbs, Proxemics are semiotic codes; as well as, aesthetics, symbolism and discourse analysis are used in Tiv tradition. The implication is that usages are embodied with signs and symbols that are garnished with Tiv cosmology; belief system and day-to-day activities of the Tiv people. The study also provides a perspective to fully understand the functionality of oral poetry among the Tiv people, especially as it relates to signs, symbols and meanings.



Internet Meme on Instagram March, 2021

Context Background

Cat dance is very similar to the movement of a cat and it is called the *tsuwe tsele*. This dance is native to Tiv people of Benue State, Nigeria. The Internet meme shows how a Tiv man performing the cat dance or *Tsuwe tsele*, which is describe as skillful. It is a special dance mimicking a cat. This dance is normally carryout by men in the state. In the cat dance (*tsuwe tsele*), dancers often adopt extremely flexible way of presenting the dancing steps which is quite and difficult to perform by women. In the cat dance competition, men are the ones that normally showcase their skills in a stylistic way. Justin (2016) observed that the cat dance is a popular dance in the Tiv popular culture and many people love the dance.

Formal Description

The composition portrays a scene of a Tiv man engaged in the cat dance moving the body so flexible in mimicking the cat. This dance is not carry out by women but by skillful men whose bodies are flexible and soft. Contrary to the general perception that a woman body is more soft and flexible to that of a man, it is evidence on some of the internet memes that a man can also move his body so flexible why performing the cat dance. This means that the men's bodies are also soft and flexible and they played a fundamental role in promoting the popular culture of the Tiv tradition. In this context, the men are also instrumental in promoting the Tiv tradition and some of the men dance more than the women. Justin (2016) supported that in the Tiv tradition, men performed almost all aspect of the Tiv traditional dance and they do well like the women do for the purpose of promoting the Tiv cultural heritage from generation to generation.

Iconographic Analysis

Drawing from cultural and mythical allusions, it is evidence in the internet meme that the man was able to position his hands very well and in a flexible manner. The waveform of the man as appears in the internet meme shows that men are flexible and they dance well and bend the body in all directions. The crossing of the two legs in the picture is also an indication that men can move their body just the way

women do. The position of the shoulder and the waist of the man in the picture shows that the body is flexible and the position of the head and the neck figure out the flexibility of the man's body. This means that the role of men in cultural promotion on the Tiv popular culture in Benue State is significantly high. The picture is a construction of a reality that men do well in dance competition in Benue State just the way women do. In the background of the picture also are group of people seated and excited about the man's performance of the cat dance.



Internet Meme on Twitter March, 2021

Contextual Background

Swange music and dance started as *Gbangi* in 1940s in Makurdi. By 1950s, it had spread to Gboko. At the time its chief exponent was Yanmoel Yashi. It was a dance band that was created by the exigencies of urban life, as a tool for protest which gave vent for the expression of frustration by Tiv youth who felt they were not fairly treated by society or fate. *Swange*, a popular Tiv music and dance in Nigeria has gone through several repositioning in response to the purview of Tiv socio-economic and political changes. To be precise, the modifications began from *Gbangi* to *Swange*, *Swange* to *Kpingi*, *Kpingi* to *Ngigh-Ngigh*, and, recently *Baka* (*Baka* is currently used at night clubs while *Swange* is been repositioned and maintained by the Benue State Council for Arts and Culture, Makurdi). This makes the origin of *Swange* dance obscure because of its changing and transitional nature. Therefore, Jenkwe in Justin (2016) observed that *Swange* is therefore taking a new and significant cultural meaning as 'respectable' music and dance and will likely added importance in the life of the Tiv people as the icon of their contemporary cultural life.

Formal Description

Swange music and dance like any folk performance is a good instrument as it speaks volumes during performances as it conveys the message through music, movements and the attendant gestures and facial expressions. Seeing the potentials and power of dance as capable of cementing relationships with other culture, it is not an over statement, because *Swange* dance like most cultural dances is an aspect that tie societies together and serve the community in a unique cultural idioms that also entertains. Thus, the above picture depicts a stationary cycle of Tiv dance competition with a mixture of men and women. The position of the dancers depict that the man's hands and the knees are well positioned. From the picture, the man twisted the waist and positioned the legs in a stylish and unique way. It is evidence in

the picture that men can also bend and move their body the way the women do.

Iconographic Analysis

Using the man in the above picture as a template, it is apparent that the men in Benue State dance very well and have a unique form of advancing Tiv popular culture. In the picture, the horsetail in the man's hand is properly positioned pointing up in a unique direction, which is quite different from the manner in which the women held their own. The man's knees are almost at the point of touching the ground, which is an indication of body flexibility compare to the women in the picture. This indicates that the belief that the body of a man is not soft and flexible among people is not correct. Evidence in the picture shows that the man performed well and could bend and move other parts of the body properly in a way that established the purpose or the essence of the entertainment for the enjoyment of the audience.

Therefore, the Tiv culture should be appreciated in terms of men dance competition rather than making comparism. Corroborating, Teghteg in Justin (2016) emphasized the functionality of *Swange* music and dance, stating that dance has been able to unite the Tiv people, even when in disagreement; the Tiv man cannot be dispassionate when he or she hears the sound of drums. In the case of *Swange* dance, nobody either Tiv or Ibo or Yoruba or Hausa, listens to its lyrics and fails to at least nod his head in appreciation. Through this dance, diverse people are often seen at state functions gyrating to its erotic dance steps. At this point, nobody remembers whether it is women or men that perform well or not or where they come from.

5. Conclusion

The study is a Semiological study of the internet memes of men dance competition on Tiv popular culture in Benue State, Nigeria. Obviously, cultures differ in their language, usage, storyline, presentation, cultural articulation, selection of dancers among others. However, profound is the fact that they represent women in similar ways, often in positive and different proportions. Additionally, based on the interpreted and analysed data generated and the adopted Semiological and the text and textual analysis, it is clear that whether portrayed side by side, or portrayed one, men are less favourable than women in dance competition on Tiv popular culture in Benue State. On the strength of the findings of this study, it was discovered that visual imageries are used symbolically on social media to show the weakness of men in dance competition in Benue State. The findings of the study also reveal that the role of men in cultural promotion on the Tiv popular culture in Benue State is significantly high. The analysed pictures are constructions of a reality that men do well in dance competition in Benue State just the way women do. The study concludes that men in the state dance very well and have a unique form of advancing Tiv popular culture.

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