

Chapter 6

Advertising Ethics in the Social Media Age: The Nigerian Scenario

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ABSTRACT

This study was conducted to assess the adherence to advertising ethics on social media by firms and organizations in Nigeria. Anchored on the social contract theory and technological determinism theory, findings on the ethical issues associated with social media advertising in Nigeria revealed that most of the advertisements on social media platforms are full of deception; advertisements on job recruitments and product marketing are not in line with the ethical codes, and also that advertisers use deception to win the hearts of the public which ordinarily will not patronize their services. It was concluded that social media advertising in Nigeria has been a breeding home for deceptive advertisements where members of the public are tricked to patronize products and services that do not reflect their choices. It was recommended that social media advertising should be closely monitored by APCON in ensuring that the ethical codes guiding advertising in Nigeria are not violated by advertisers who have capitalized on the advantage of social media to mislead members of the public.

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INTRODUCTION

The world has witnessed great advances in communication technologies and its effect has caused a revolution in the economies of most countries of the world, institutions, professional bodies as well as the advertising profession (UNO, 2022; Efendioglu, & Durmaz, 2022; Chile, 2013). The improvement in technology has ushered in social media which since its arrival has remained a dominant tool used by advertisers and corporate firms in marketing their products and services. Tuten (2008) pointed out that the very philosophy of advertising has changed, the usual advertising tripod comprising the advertiser, brief, media and advertising agency and has gradually been replaced with the advertising circle. Efendioglu, & Durmaz, (2022) further stressed that the walls of partition are becoming thinner, collapsing and fast fading away; thus, ushering in a new dawn in the advertising world.

The usual media of advertising have also undergone tremendous changes all over the world (Kathiravan, 2017). Television, radio, newspapers and magazines are no longer the exclusive platforms for relaying advertising messages. The new media have entered the scene and as it were, getting and gaining their fair share of the 'advertising cake' thus liberalizing the advertising landscape. It is revealed by Eid and Ward (2009) that, in the present age of information superhighway, millions of people around the globe through social networking such as Facebook, Twitter, WhatsApp, Instagram, TikTok and a host of others, are building online local, regional and global communities to communicate their shared interests and activities, disseminate information and interact through a variety of web-based tools (Kisyova et al, 2019).

Consequently, Efendioglu, & Durmaz (2022) affirm that social media advertising is a recent addition to organizations' integrated marketing communications plans. According to Corruthers (2010), 'integrated marketing communication (IMC) coordinates the elements of the promotional mix; advertising, personal selling, public relations, publicity, direct marketing, and sales promotion'. The growth of social media has impacted the way organizations communicate. Corruthers (2010) opine that, with the emergence of Web 2.0, the Internet provides a set of tools that allow people to build social and business connections, share information and collaborate on projects online. He stressed further that, social media marketing programmes usually centre on efforts to create content that attracts attention and encourages readers to share it with their social networks. Social media have become a platform that is easily accessible to anyone with Internet access, opening doors for organizations to increase their brand awareness and facilitate conversations with customers. Additionally, social media serve as a relatively inexpensive platform for organizations to implement marketing campaigns (Corruthers, 2010).

The advertising industry is growing rapidly at an extremely fast pace in Nigeria. According to Dabiri (2015), the advertising industry in Nigeria is well developed, all things considered, and is constantly improving and there is a presence of all forms of advertising in Nigeria at the moment. Similarly, Nnamdi (2015) explained that the advertising industry in Nigeria is a huge industry that is developing to become one of the most respected in the world. The advance in both technologies and creativity in the industry is making it become one of the most enviable in the world. He asserted that "When you look at the adverts we had 10 years ago, and compare them to what we have today you are compelled to be impressed with the development in the industry.

However, compliance with the advertising code in the new media era has raised more concerns as some practices contravene the advertising code. Nwanejuafor (2013) laments that most advertising agencies are presently so wrapped up in the use of sexual appeal, that it seems almost impossible for them to create an outstanding advert without the use of half-naked models or sexual innuendos. It is though saddening that most companies advertise even services they do not offer or advertise extremely and be-

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