

## 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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## ***Advertising Ethics in the Social Media Age***

### **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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yond normal levels just to persuade potential customers in ways that rather entice the consumer while at the same time going against the ethical codes of conduct of the advertising regulatory body in Nigeria.

The Advertising Practitioners Council of Nigeria - APCON is the regulatory agency in Nigeria. It is to Nigeria what the Federal Trade Commission - FTC is to the United States or what Advertising Standards Canada - ASC is to Canada. According to Ozoh (1998, p. 197), Decree 55 of 1988 among other provisions provides that APCON shall regulate and control the practice of advertising in all its ramifications. It is in the exercise of this immense and wide power conferred on it that APCON developed a code of ethics to guide and regulate the practice of advertising in Nigeria. However, in the year 1992, an amendment called the Advertising Practitioners Council of Nigeria (Amendment) Decree No 93 of 92 was initiated. It is provided under section 21a for a body to be established and be known as the Advertising Standards Panel (ASP). The Panel is empowered to vet all advertisements before they are exposed to the media. No advertisement ideally is to be exposed by the media unless it has been vetted and approved by the Advertising Standards Panel (Ozoh 1998).

Basic advertising requirements as indicated on APCON's website as noted by Dunu, Uche, Obiora and Ojiakor (2016) include: All advertisements shall be legal, decent, honest, truthful, respectful and mindful of Nigeria's culture; They should be prepared with a high sense of social responsibility and should avoid misinformation; All advertisements should conform to the principles of fair competition generally accepted in business and of fair comments expected in free human communication.; the aim is to enhance public confidence in advertising and should always be in the interest of the consumer and wider society.

Ozoh (1998) stressed that the Advertising Code of APCON, number 5 under the administration of the code specifies thus: (i) This code applies to the entire contents of an advertisement, including all words and numbers (spoken or written), visual presentations, music and sound effects. (ii) It should be applied in spirit as well as by the letter. Despite the above, regulating internet advertising has become a herculean task for both operators and the regulator. According to the Chief Executive Officer of Karewa.com, Nino Njopkou, regulating online advertising content poses a huge challenge for operators; on the Internet, fraud is a big issue that all User Generated Content, UGC websites confront. Nonetheless, APCON is set to tighten regulations on all forms of advertising carried out through the internet medium (Nwokpoku, 2013). According to him, a former Chairman of APCON, Lolu Akinwumi stated this while speaking to Vanguard on the sidelines of a conference in Lagos to present corporate licenses and certificates to some organizations under the new APCON regime. He said that owing to the unique challenges that online advertising poses for regulation, the regulatory agency would collaborate with Google and other online classified advert operators in the country to improve regulation and protect consumers. That "APCON's fundamental duty has always been and will continue to be regulating all advertising contents". It is on this premise that this study is designed to examine social media advertisers' adherence to advertising codes of ethics as set out by the Advertising Practitioners Council of Nigeria (APCON). This study is designed to assess advertisers' adherence to advertising ethics on social media by firms and organizations in Nigeria.

## **OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY**

The specific objectives of study are to:

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- i. examine the effect of social media on advertising in Nigeria;
- ii. identify the ethical issues associated with social media advertising in Nigeria;
- iii. ascertain APCON's role in the fight against unethical and breach of advertising codes in Nigeria.

**RESEARCH QUESTIONS**

Results of this study were collected under three research questions which include:

- i. What is the impact of social media on advertising in Nigeria?
- ii. What are the ethical issues associated with social media advertising in Nigeria?
- iii. Have the advertising regulatory body APCON fulfilled its expectation in fighting against unethical and breach of advertising codes in Nigeria?

This study's population comprised 30 respondents who are staff of organizations that are involved in advertising practices such as job recruitments, marketing and sales of products and services. Since the population was made of only 30 respondents, the census method was used.

**CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK****Advertising**

The Advertising Practitioners Council of Nigeria (APCON) defines advertising as a form of communication through the media about products, services or ideas paid for by an identified sponsor (Okoro, 1998). However, advertising, when conceived for an online environment and given contextual differences in its capabilities, functions, and the medium's nuances, requires a new paradigm (Kisyova et al, 2019). The current definition of advertising states that advertising must be paid communication. Certainly, that is the model by which advertising has operated since its conception. But now, some of the most valuable advertising may be unpaid, or indirectly paid as in the case of CGM (consumer-generated media), some aspects of social media advertising, and the viral spread of brand messages (Tuten, 2008).

Kisyova et al, (2019) assert that advertising has traditionally been viewed as one-way communication, delivered from the advertiser through some media vehicle to a receiver, the target audience. Thinking of advertising as one-way communication limits what is possible, particularly online. In a world with Web 2.0 (social media), advertising encounters a new phase. Social media enable interactive capabilities in an environment characterized by user control, freedom, and dialogue and bring a new degree of interactivity and consumer involvement to advertising applications. Social media truly enable two-way (or multi-way) communication between brands and consumers. Online advertising becomes more about conversations, connections, and shared control and less about passive consumption of packaged content (Tuten, 2008). Dominick (2009) explains that advertising is not only paid for in this era but word of mouth (viral advertising) is used to harness paid advertising.

Advertising is a worldwide business activity and its importance increases as more corporations globally have adopted its potential. Chile (2013) states that advertising is widely regarded as both a social and economic force in all free enterprise systems the world over. This is due mainly to the fact that ad-

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vertising is recognized as a persuasive information force in influencing and affecting the behaviour of people in a society. Advertising has grown from a state of crudity to the highest level of sophistication today, it has continued to utilize the same set of methods, tools and techniques that have been in use over time (Kisyova et al, 2019).

What has become an important decimal in the tremendous development of advertising practice is the fact that it has attracted a wide array of perspectives of exploration and exploitation all in an attempt at understanding the meaning of this persuasive force. According to Dyer (1982), advertising simply means ‘drawing attention to something or notifying or informing somebody of something’. Dyer’s definition of advertising is rather narrow but Wright, Winter and Zeigler (1982) added that advertising is controlled, identifiable information and persuasion using mass communication”. Both definitions tendered here clearly lack depth especially when weighed against the practice of advertising as a promotional component in modern marketing communications.

## **Social Media**

The term social media concerns all forms of new media technology that offer interactive sharing of information, videos, pictures, text and comments with such websites as Twitter, Facebook, Whatsapp, YouTube, etc (James & Brandley, 2021). These social media channels are effective in facilitating communication locally and globally. Facebook, for example, has today gained global prominence among people as it serves reasonably in the sharing of information. According to Boyd, and Ellison (2008:210) social network sites (SNSs) like Facebook, Orkut, LinkedIn and Twitter have involved millions of users, many of whom have hinged these social sites into their day-to-day life activities including business. One of the good sides of these sites is that they help strangers to connect on shared interests, political views, or some other happenings.

James & Brandley (2021) argue that Web 2.0 is the idea of a second-generation internet that is highly participatory, allowing users to modify and improve it as they use it. Social media content is primarily written and published by its users and not owners or employees of the site. For instance, most adverts, videos and pictures on Facebook and Twitter are uploaded by visitors to the sites. Web 2.0 has been growing tremendously as it facilitates the production and dissemination of information, allows for the involvement in participatory culture to share individual expressions or creations and brings people with similar interests and goals to connect on blogs, social networking sites and others (Dominick, 2009).

Kaplan and Haenlein (2010) define social media as a group of internet-based applications that build on the ideological and technological foundations of Web 2.0 and allows the creation and exchange of user-generated content. It includes web-based and mobile-based technologies that are used to turn communication into interactive dialogue among individuals, organizations and communities. Typical examples of social media platforms include websites such as Facebook, Twitter, Flickr, and YouTube and the interactive options on these websites such as the retweeting option on Twitter. These instruments are referred to as media because they are tools that can also be used for the storage and dissemination of information. However, unlike traditional media like television and radio, most social media tools allow their users to interact as retweeting on Twitter and comment options on Facebook illustrate.

Looking at social media from a more practical point of view, Sweetser and Lariscy (2008: 179) define social media as a “read-write Web, where the online audience moves beyond passive viewing of Web content to contribute content”. One thing that is common in most definitions of social media is the point that it is based on user-generated participation. In another development, Clark and Aufderheide (2009)

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note that the opportunity to enjoy user-to-user interaction distinguishes social media from traditional media which is characterized by top-down news dissemination arrangement. Another attribute of social media that distinguishes it from traditional media is the choice it accords its users. Choice enables people to access the information they like to learn about through social media, eliminating the gatekeeper role of traditional media. The chance offered by social media reduces the shared experience that viewers of particular traditional media channels usually have; on the other hand, it creates a network of individuals with like interests and similar preferences.

**THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK****The Social Contract Theory**

The belief that people's moral and/or political obligations are contingent on a contract or agreement among them to construct the society in which they live is known as social contract theory. SCT developed in response to a need to justify the legitimacy of government at the time of the social upheavals in 17th and 18th century Europe (Wempe, 2005; Sayre-McCord, 2000). Different versions or understanding of this theory exist hence its age-old history. It starts with Socrates who in the early Platonic dialogue *Crito*; from Socrates' point of view, asserted that a just man is one who will, among other things, recognize his obligation to the state by obeying its laws. The state is the most essential moral and political entity, and it demands our highest allegiance and respect. However, Thomas Hobbes (1651) reintroduced the theory in its present form, which was later elaborated in various ways by John Locke, Jean-Jacques Rousseau, and Immanuel Kant. The theory fell out of favour with political philosophers after Kant, until John Rawls revived it. It currently forms the basis of various moral and political philosophers' work (Wempe, 2005; Sayre-McCord, 2000).

Thomas Hobbes (1651) contends, in a ground-breaking argument for the time, that political power and obligation are based on the individual self-interests of society's members who are understood to be equal to one another, with no single individual invested with any essential authority to rule over the rest, while holding the conservative position that the monarch, whom he referred to as the Sovereign, must relinquish total sovereignty if society is to exist.

Hobbes' political theory is best understood if taken in two parts: his theory of human motivation, Psychological Egoism, and his theory of the social contract, founded on the hypothetical State of Nature. Hobbes has, first and foremost, a particular theory of human nature, which gave rise to a particular view of morality and politics, as developed in his philosophical masterpiece, "*Leviathan*" published in 1651.

Hobbes (1651) and Wempe, (2005) argue that morality, politics, society, and everything that comes along with it, all of which Hobbes calls 'commodious living' are purely conventional. Prior to the establishment of the basic social contract, according to which men agree to live together and the contract to embody a Sovereign with absolute authority, nothing is immoral or unjust – anything goes. After these contracts are established, however, then society becomes possible, and people can be expected to keep their promises, cooperate with one another, and so on. The Social Contract is the most fundamental source of all that is good and that which we depend upon to live well. Our choice is either to abide by the terms of the contract or return to the State of Nature, which Hobbes argues no reasonable person could possibly prefer.

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In relation to this study, the social contract theory is explained through the parties (APCON vs Social Media Users), the agreement (to monitor & regulate advertisements before they are broadcast to the public), what the agreement is supposed to show (advertising content that has been flagged by APCON). The theory is relevant to this study because it addresses the issue of advertising regulations and how they should be implemented in advertising contracts.

### **Technological Determinism Theory**

Technological Determinism Theory was propounded by an American sociologist, Thorstein Veblen in 1929. The theory provides that a society has come a long way and that the reason for that is the technology change (Héder, 2021). Adler and Borys (1993) advocate that as technology changes, so does society because it affects how the people in a particular society think, feel and operate. Héder (2021) further buttresses this assertion that the main reason this happens is because of the communication and technology developments that dictate how people communicate with one another in any society.

Héder (2021) argues that technology shapes the way individuals think, feel and act and how societies organize themselves and operate stressing that as communication technology (like the new media) evolves and advances, so does human life. Baran (1999) sees technological determinism as machines and their developments which drive historical, economic, political and cultural change. Baran further stresses that, along this line of reasoning, thinkers in this perspective see technology as more neutral and claim that the way people use technology is what gives it significance and accept technology as one of the many factors that bring historical, economic, political and cultural changes. Therefore, this means that technology's influence is ultimately determined by how much power it is given by the people and cultures that use it. This perspective on technological determinism has raised the question of whether people are more or less powerful in the wake of technological advances like advertising via the new media. If we are at the mercy of technology, as the former perspective argues, the culture that surrounds us will not be of our making and the best we can hope to do is make our way reasonably well in a world outside our control.

If these technological advances are indeed neutral and their power resides in how they are used, using them responsibly and thoughtfully to construct and maintain whatever culture is desired becomes imperative. In applying this theory to the study, the use, misuse or abuse of advertising on the internet platform depends on the choice of the people that use the technology. Aziz (2014) opines that the new media offers novel opportunities especially as the internet has become the prime mover which drives the socio-economic, political and historical advancements in the Nigerian advertising landscape. Worthy of note is the fact that there is now a paradigm shift as new technologies have transformed content consumers into content producers including advertising and have given rise to what is now known as 'Prosumers'. The relevance of this theory to the study is that the emergence of social media technology has brought a paradigm shift from the traditional method of advertising. Social media platforms now drive most of the advertising with its attendant ethical issues, hence the theory is used to explain the new phenomenon which social media has introduced into advertising.

***Advertising Ethics in the Social Media Age*****LITERATURE REVIEW**

Clarisse et al (2022) hold the view that millions of people around the globe through social networking such as TikTok and Instagram, are currently, 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. Belch & Belch (2009) stress that, while the internet is changing the ways companies design and implement their entire business and marketing communication programmes, “companies need to see potential and existing clients on social media as communities to be built and nurtured rather than just customers who are potential purchasers of goods and services” in support. Fyfe (2009) maintains that while social media collectively can be considered interactive communication vehicles, corporate communicators must learn to distinguish the components of various social media platforms, each of which has unique strengths (Darmatama, & Erdiansyah, 2021).

Wivedi, et al (2018) argues that social media is used for virtually every aspect of human activity and that the use of social media has its good the bad and the ugly hence the emphasis has been on the need for both self-regulatory and legislation to guide the use of social media. Sandberg (2010) is of the view that ‘on Facebook, people do everything from remembering their friends’ birthdays to reuniting with old classmates and family members. In a more connected world, advertisers are social too’. All these activities give individuals the chance to connect to the companies and brands they like and learn more about their products and services.

Ghoshal (2019) avers that social media otherwise called online media promotes advertising and publicity for both big and small businesses. Arens, Weigold and Arens (2011) further remark “online media enable businesses and other organizations to nurture and develop relationships with their customers and other stakeholders, in a way never before available on a global scale at very efficient cost”. Saverin (2010) agrees that “as the Web increasingly democratizes innovation and costs, anyone can showcase a product on Facebook, TikTok, Instagram and others (Khan, 2018; James & Bradley, 2021).

Rostam (2020) affirms that the emergence of social media has some negative effects on both marketing or advertising and social life the young people generally. Hence, it is widely believed that whatever has an advantage also has a disadvantage. Barros (2009) concurs that the use of social media also bears threats which translates to issues and challenges. Lyon (2009) explained that a Newsweek article reported that some Facebook users are being tricked into signing up for paid products or services through advertisements and that because of one of the principles of social media, that is, the ability of anyone to add content to them, it is hard for users to check the authenticity of the message. As the above example shows, false content is trusted. Although false or faulty content after being assessed does not have a long-life span because the community warns each other about such content, Papworth (2010) explains that an organization’s reputation can suffer serious damage when they publish false content.

Natasa et al (2019) argue that in social media advertisement, issues of exposure of privacy of people also arise because social media users often share personal data online although users usually have to agree beforehand to have their information published, using this information may be ethically dubious. Measuring and assessing the results of a social media marketing programme is critical to its success as well as a very challenging activity. Murdough (2009) also states that the blogosphere provides many suggestions on how to assess the performance of a social advertising programme.

Clarisse et al (2022) states that the pluralization of social media platforms particularly with the recent ones such TikTok and Instagram, there is a considerable unethical issue in social media advertising. This informs the reason why the era of advertising on social media platforms in Nigeria has been said



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to be very deceptive especially as most of the information posted is different from what such organizations carry out as their services. There are obvious challenges because the monitoring of the internet is something that poses its challenges. Nwokpoku (2013) opines that APCON is working with Google and the other online advert operators to ensure that there is enough control on the content that goes out of the websites of all the big organizations. Nwokpoku (2013) further notes that when he contacted two of the leading online classifieds operators in Nigeria, OLX and Karewa on how they are regulating advertising through the internet medium, they said that they already had a mechanism in place that ensures that fraudulent contents are warded off and consumers are protected. Quoting the Head of Marketing OLX Africa, Ms. Brown Johnson admitted: "We have people who read every advert submitted before it is posted and there are certain things that they look out for to ensure that it is not a scam. We generally take a zero-tolerance approach to that kind of entry and we do not let it go. We also report to local authorities like the police if we pick up such things. We know we cannot guarantee 100 per cent safety but we do all the things we can to protect our users" (Nwokpoku, 2013).

Ethics is an integral part of all professions and advertising is not an exception. However, research done by Natasa et al (2019) has shown that there are issues of unethical practice or violation of code of ethics by practitioners, especially, in the age of digital technology. According to the issue of unethical advertising, deceptions, advertisements targeting children, the exploitation of sex and gender, and also the issues of subliminal advertising.

## **RESEARCH METHOD**

This study adopted both content analytical (qualitative) and survey (quantitative) research methods with questionnaire and texts as the instruments for data collection. These methods were considered appropriate because they facilitate collection of in-depth data that cover all the elements in the population

Five organizations were purposively sampled for the study. Purposive method of sampling was adopted because of the nature of the study which has to do with organizations which have been involved in social media advertising. The sampled organizations include Tempkors limited, Lily Solutions, Fesadeb Communications Ltd, Soho Properties, Blue Orange Limited, and Hite K Communications. All of the organizations have five (5) respondents each were also purposively sampled based on their position and experience on the use of social media advertising and the code of ethics, which brought a total number of thirty (30) respondents.

For the qualitative method, inferences were gotten from thirty (30) advertisements that are posted by the firms with very captivating and persuading messages but are initially deceptive. Such data is presented along with those from the questionnaire to support the presented data for a better understanding.

**Advertising Ethics in the Social Media Age****Results***Table 1. Impact of social media on advertising in Nigeria*

Response	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Social media advertising facilitates easy publicity of products and services.	14	46.7
Draws public attention to new products and services.	10	33.3
Gives clear descriptions of products and services.	6	20
Total	30	100

Source: Field Survey, 2022

Table 1 is a presentation of data on the impact of social media on advertising in Nigeria. Information on the table above reveals that 14 (46.7%) of the sampled respondents revealed that social media advertising facilitates easy publicity of products and services, 10 (33.3%) of them are of the opinion that it draws public attention to new products and services while 6 (20%) of them said it gives a clear description of products and services.

**Content Analytical Data**

From the analysis of online advertising, as contained on the websites of the selected companies and organizations in Nigeria especially Soho properties, Lilly Solutions and many others, it is noted that, apart from firms promoting their programmes and services and drawing public attention, they do not always deliver to their customers what they advertise on their social media pages. They only persuade their consumers to key into their initiatives for profit motives while in most cases, they handpick those they want to favour especially those within their circles of business.

Comparatively, data gotten through the questionnaire and those obtained through content analysis are in tune with the views of the respondents on online advertising in Nigeria.

*Table 2. Ethical issues associated with social media advertising in Nigeria*

Response	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Most of the advertisements on social media platforms are full of deception.	17	56.7
Advertisements on job recruitments and product marketing are not in line with the ethical codes.	5	16.7
Advertisers use deception to win the hearts of the public which ordinarily will not patronise their services.	8	26.6
Total	30	100

Source: Field Survey, 2022

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Table 2 presents data on the ethical issues associated with Social Media advertising in Nigeria. Data contained in table 2 show that 17 (56.7%) of the sampled respondents decry that most advertisements on social media platforms are full of deception, and 5 (16.7%) of them said that advertisements on jobs recruitments and product marketing are not in line with the ethical codes while 8 (26.6%) state that, advertisers use deception to win the hearts of the public which ordinarily will not patronize their services.

### Content Analytical Data

Data obtained from advertisements for consumer goods reveal that consumers are seriously deceived to buy products with different effects on consumers against their initial desires. In one case, a consumer raised alarm over an advertised product where the manufacturer of 'Bonn Nutrients' said when the product is purchased by consumers in large quantities, such consumers would be lucky to win assorted prices in different items. This advertisement required consumers to purchase the product and scratch the panel to see that which they had won. The sad experience is that, upon purchase and scratch of the coupon, consumers were sad to see a text reading 'try again' meaning that, the manufacturer had only devised a means of massively selling its products.

Data from the questionnaire and content analysis of online advertising have revealed that the advertising scenario in Nigeria is simply the same, especially in organizations that are solely concerned with profit-making rather than serving consumer interests. This, therefore, presents a case of deception and promotion of fake services to consumers.

*Table 3. Whether the advertising regulatory body APCON has been up to its expectation in fighting against unethical and breach of advertising codes in Nigeria*

Response	Frequency	Percentage (%)
<b>APCON does more to advertisements on the broadcast media.</b>	13	43.3
<b>Less of its regulation is heard on social media advertising due to limited data on online/social media advertising firms.</b>	9	30
<b>APCON does not regulate a majority of social media advertisements hence the high deceptive nature in them.</b>	8	26.7
Total	<b>30</b>	<b>100</b>

Source: Field Survey, 2022

On whether the advertising regulatory body APCON has been up to its expectation in fighting against unethical and breach of advertising codes in Nigeria. Information gathered in the Table above shows that 13 (43.3%) of the respondents are of the view that APCON does more to advertisements on the broadcast media, and 9 (30%) said less of its regulation is heard on social media advertising due to limited data on online/social media advertising firms while 8 (26.7%) of them said APCON does not regulate majority of the social media advertisements hence the high deceptive nature of advertising in them.

Analysis of the opinions of respondents across different organizations has corroborated the views of those administered the questionnaire where, in part, it is revealed that APCON has tried in its position to regulate and also sanction erring parties found to be promoting conflicts of thoughts and inciting

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members of the public against certain beliefs and judgements. One such case is a recent advertisement by Sterling Bank of Nigeria where the bank in its application of public relations tactics on its consumers informed that the resurrection of Christ Jesus is like 'Agege Bread'. It can be recalled that the bank in question has been involved in similar heated advertisements. One of such was in 2018 when it caused controversy by stating that, other financial lenders in the country are below its level. The advertisement was followed by several reactions by members of the Nigerian public thereby forcing the bank to withdraw the statement just as it tendered an apology to Christians by comparing the resurrection of Christ to Agege Bread in April 2022.

It should be noted that arising from the heated advertisement by Sterling bank, its Registrar and Chief Executive, Olalekan Fadolapo (2022) described the message as 'Insensitive and provocative' and assured necessary actions would be taken while sanctions would also be meted on the bank.

## **DISCUSSION**

The first objective of the study was to examine the effect of social media on advertising in Nigeria. Based on data gathered and analyzed from both the survey and content of adverts, it was found that the impact of social media on advertising in Nigeria is enormous. In other words, the emergence of social media has brought about a lot of impacts on advertising in the Nigerian advertising landscape. The analysis shows that the use of social media for advertising facilitates easy and wide spread of publicity for products and services in Nigeria, draws public attention to new products and services and gives a clear description of products and services. The data from both the survey and textual analysis point to this finding. The finding, though situated in the Nigerian social media ecosystem, attests to the position of Héder (2021) who asserts that the main reason for the use of social media for advertising is because of the speed of communication and technology developments that dictate how people communicate with one another in any society through the use of digital technology (social media). The effect of social media on advertising in Nigeria is both positive and negative. The positive effect is the wide publicity that products and services enjoy which eventually brings about increased sales which is the ultimate aim of advertising. The negative effect on the other hand, is seen in the deception being spread by some unethical approaches adopted by some advertisers as outlined by Natasa et al (2019). On the negative impact of social media, Rostam (2020) affirms that in addition to advertising, its negative effect transcends to other areas of life especially among youth academic performance. This implies that social media has both negative and positive effects on advertising (ethical issues) and among the young people (learning outcome).

The second objective was to identify the ethical issues associated with social media advertising in Nigeria. On the ethical issues associated with social media advertising in Nigeria, it was found that most of the advertisements on social media platforms are full of deception; advertisements on jobs recruitments and product marketing are not in line with the ethical codes and advertisers also use deception to win the hearts of the public which ordinarily would not patronize their services. This is related to the view of Lyons (2009) study of a Newsweek article that reported that some Facebook and other social media platforms users are being tricked into signing up for paid products or services through advertisements and that because of one of the principles of social media as asserted by (Nooh, 2022), that is, the ability of anyone to add content to them, it is hard for users to check the authenticity of the message.

The third objective was to ascertain APCON's role in the fight against unethical and breach of advertising. Information on whether the advertising regulatory body APCON has been up to its expectation in

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fighting against unethical and breach of advertising codes in Nigeria revealed that APCON does more to advertisements on the broadcast media and that less of its regulation is observed on Social media advertising which is due to limited data of online/social media advertising firms and that APCON does not regulate a majority of the Social media advertisements hence the high deceptive nature in them. This finding relates to the opinion of Nwokpoku (2013) who states that APCON is working with Google and the other online advert operators to ensure that there is enough control on the content that goes out of the websites of all the big organizations. This is also in line with the view of Kisyo, et al, (2019) that social media technology gives room for unethical issues such as users privacy, and other code of ethics of advertising.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

Based on the findings, the study recommends as follows:

- i. 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.
- ii. Firms and advertisers should be seriously monitored and their briefs handed over to regulatory firms for proper vetting before such adverts are posted online. This will reduce the situation where advertisers especially recruiters post jobs for different roles while they offer different services.
- iii. Members of the public should be guided and encouraged to expose firms with deceptive adverts to the regulatory body so that this ugly trend among advertisers on social media would be stopped or greatly reduced.
- iv. APCON should be seen to enforce stringent penalty against defaulters of the code of ethics of advertising in Nigeria to serve as deterrence.
- v. APCON in conjunction with the legislative arm of the government should work out comprehensive policy formulation, taking into cognizance the peculiarities of the digital media landscape, to remedy the limitations of this current regulations.

## **CONCLUSION**

The study concludes that although ethically challenged, the emergence of social or new media technology has revolutionized the advertising practice in Nigeria. 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 and desires. Many adverts especially those that are heavily decorated, do not meet the public expectations. The code of ethics of the advertising firms on social media is questioned because they have been found to have greatly violated the trust members of the public have in online advertising. the study further concludes that APCON has not done enough in this regard and therefore, they should intensify efforts in maintaining the code of ethics of the advertising profession. This is because most job recruiting firms post job roles that are not even related to what they advertise when seeking the application of job seekers among others.

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**KEY TERMS AND DEFINITIONS**

**Advertising:** a form of communication through the media about products, services or ideas paid for by an identified sponsor.

**APCON:** The Advertising Practitioners Council of Nigeria - APCON is the regulatory agency in Nigeria. It is to Nigeria what the Federal Trade Commission - FTC is to the United States or what Advertising Standards Canada - ASC is to Canada.

**Ethics:** Dealing with values relating to human conduct, with respect to the rightness and wrongness of certain actions and to the goodness and badness of the motives and ends of such actions.

**Ethical Codes:** A guiding set of principles intended to instruct professionals to act in a manner that is honest and that is beneficial to all stakeholders involved.

**Promotional Mix:** Describes a blend of promotional variables chosen by marketers to help a firm reach its goals. It has been identified as a subset of the marketing mix.

**Social Media:** The term social media concerns all forms of new media technology that offer interactive sharing of information, videos, pictures, text and comments with such websites as Twitter, Facebook, Whatsapp, YouTube etc

**Social Contract Theory:** The belief that people's moral and/or political obligations are contingent on a contract or agreement among them to construct the society in which they live.

**Technological Determinism Theory:** Technological Determinism Theory was propounded by an American sociologist, Thorstein Veblen in 1929. The theory provides that a society has come a long way and that the reason for that is the technology change

**Web 2.0:** is the idea of a second-generation internet that is highly participatory, allowing users to modify and improve it as they use it. Social media content is primarily written and published by its users and not owners or employees of the site.