

# CORPORATE ADVERTISING BY THE INDEPENDENT NATIONAL ELECTORAL COMMISSION (INEC) IN THE 2023 GENERAL ELECTIONS IN NIGERIA

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## Abstract

This paper is titled *Corporate Advertising by the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) in the 2023 General Elections in Nigeria*. The paper seeks to examine how INEC, as a corporate organization, utilizes corporate advertising in the conduct of the 2023 general elections in Nigeria. The paper conceptualizes corporate advertising for clarity and a better understanding of the concept under review. Adopting the secondary method of data collection, the paper gathered relevant literature through books, journal articles, and the internet, among others. The study was anchored on the structural functionalism theory, which sees a society as a whole in terms of the function of its constituent elements, namely norms, customs, traditions, and institutions. INEC, as one of the institutions in our society, is saddled with the responsibility of conducting a free, fair, credible, and peaceful election that will produce credible, promising, and good leaders for the good of the society as a whole. The study also established that INEC engages in corporate advertising to promote its causes, raise awareness about its mission and programs, attract support and voter participation, and generate public interest and engagement. The study, therefore, concluded that the effect of advertising on corporate image is extremely vital for any organization. This is due to the fact that it stimulates consumer demand for their products or services, which eventually leads to an increase in sales or patronage levels, resulting in a high profit or a good reputation.

**Keywords:** *Corporate Advertising, INEC, 2023 General Election, Nigeria.*

## 1. INTRODUCTION

In Nigeria, organizations engage in corporate advertising in order to achieve various objectives. It helps in building the brand awareness and recognition of organizations. By promoting their brand through various advertising channels such as television, radio, print media, online platforms, and outdoor signage, companies aim to ensure that their target audience is familiar with their name, logo, and services. This increased visibility

contributes to brand recall and establishes a strong brand presence in the minds of consumers or of the general public.

Corporate advertising allows organizations to shape their image. They can communicate their core values, mission, and vision to the public, thereby influencing how they are perceived. Through compelling storytelling, emotional appeals, and engaging visuals, companies in Nigeria can create a positive perception and cultivate a desired brand image that resonates with their target market. It plays a crucial role in building public loyalty and trust. By consistently communicating their commitment to quality, customer satisfaction, and ethical practices, organizations can strengthen their relationships with existing customers and attract new ones (Asemah et al., 2018).

The Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) is the electoral body which oversees elections in Nigeria. It was established by the 1999 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria to, among other things, organize elections into various political offices in the country (INEC, n.d.). The body is primarily responsible for organizing and conducting elections in the country. While INEC may engage in communication and public awareness activities related to the electoral process, it is important to note that the term "corporate advertising" typically refers to promotional activities undertaken by businesses or organizations in order to promote their products, services, or brand image.

However, INEC's communication efforts are distinct from the traditional corporate advertising campaigns employed by businesses and other

companies. INEC's focus is on ensuring free and fair elections and providing accurate information to voters, rather than promoting products or services for commercial purposes. It generally focuses on voter education, mobilization, and transparency in the electoral process. These efforts may include public service announcements, voter registration campaigns, voter education programs, and information dissemination about election dates, polling stations, and voting procedures. These activities aim to enhance voter participation, promote transparency, and build trust in the electoral process.

Experts are of the opinion that one of the ways of forming corporate image is through corporate advertising. Corporate advertisement is often holistic as it gives stakeholders the necessary information about the company or organization. It builds the appropriate image of an organization in a convincing manner against the assumption of what is imagined and heard from unreliable sources. The methods of advertising varied but on a wide spectrum it involved both electronic and print media. The visible manifestation of advertising to promote corporate image varied but could involve the use of letters, symbols, logos and other design in order to promote the corporate image of an organization. It is against this backdrop that the paper examines corporate advertising by INEC in the 2023 general elections in Nigeria.

### **Understanding the Concept of Corporate Advertising**

Corporate advertising refers to the promotional activities undertaken by organizations in Nigeria to enhance their brand image, build loyalty, and create a positive perception among stakeholders. It involves strategic communication efforts aimed at showcasing a company's values, products, services, and corporate social responsibility initiatives. Corporate advertising is an integral part of the marketing and branding strategies, allowing companies to establish a strong presence in the market, differentiate themselves from their competitors, and connect with their target audience on a broader scale. Corporate Advertising is an extension of the public relations function, which does not aim at promoting any specific product or service; it is a form of advertising

designed to promote the overall image of the firm or organisational reputation (Asemah et al, 2018; Baker & Balmer, 1997).

Corporate advertising as a basic public relations tool is that broad area of non-product advertising aimed specifically at enhancing a company's image and increasing awareness. It can be defined as the paid use of media that seeks to benefit the image of the corporation as a whole, rather than its product or services alone. Corporate advertising is a promotional strategy that is designed to not only interest consumers in the products and services offered by an organisation, but also, to cultivate a positive reputation among consumers and others, within the business world. The focus of corporate advertising is on the company itself, with the attention to the products produced by the organisation being a by-product of the advertising effort (Linefdotcom, 2012). Corporate advertising is a tool which can be used at the field of public relations to gain respect and reputation to a corporation. From this point of view, corporate advertising represents a cross point for advertising and public relations, the two fields supporting each other through corporate advertising applications. Thus, the term corporate advertising is so close to public relations, since both of them are trying to establish the corporate image. In other words, corporate advertising is a kind of advertising style that aims at developing the image of an enterprise as a whole rather than introducing a new product or a service (Aktan & Ozupek, 2015).

Corporate advertising is an advertising activity which is used with the aim of transferring the messages and tools in details in public relations. As a result of these transferring, corporations try to create an integrated sense on the target group and in this way they try to perform the positioning. With a wide explanation, corporate advertising is a kind of advertising that reflects the corporation's philosophy (mission, vision, targets), the view point of the corporation to domestic and foreign crowds, their social responsibility understanding, their working style, corporate communication understanding and the corporate design of the corporation (logo, emblem, brand name, corporate colour, trade style etc.). All these aspects are transferred into the identity and culture of the

corporation. The corporate advertisements which take the corporation and its components in the centre and the emotional stimulus which uses symbolic approaches and associations that try to form a target group connection are also as important as the rational stimulus (corporate success, awards, financial power etc.) (Elden, 2009; Elden and Yeygel, 2006).

In this context, corporate advertising is remarked as a component of both public relations and communication management. Today, corporate communication management produces rather useful aspects in order to strengthen the bond between the target group and corporation. Images have positive effects on the shareholder environment of the corporation. Corporate advertising is also a concept which contributes to the establishment of images. It is not only responsible for the items that they are selling, but it is also responsible for the problems which are originated from an opponent corporation. In this condition corporate advertising stands up for the corporation benefits (Elden, 2009).

Corporate advertisement is used when the control of the corporation on the news to be broadcasted on the media is necessary (Tomic et. Al., 2010). Especially, corporate advertisement is used when there is news on media detriment to the corporation. In some sort, corporate advertising represents a free communication manner of public relations. When the firm wants to inform the public about its benefits, it can give press bulletin to the media. If the firm broadcasts on the media freely, the problem related to publicity can be solved. But media may not always do this publicity. In this case, corporate advertising takes the duty and buys time and place from the media. Sometimes, however, some misunderstandings may occur in the comprehension of corporate advertising due to this situation, namely, some oversimplified corporate advertising, as if it was a sub-branch of advertising. Because corporate advertising is the face and sound of the corporation, it represents a way of communicating with the public.

### **Functions of Corporate Advertising**

In general terms, corporate advertisements are used to fulfil four basic functions. These

functions as enumerated by Argenti & Forman, 2002, cited in Taşkıran & Yılmaz, 2015 include:

- i. To create an image for a new business or reforming the old one;
- ii. To define or assert the position of the corporation on a topic emphasizing public peace or social responsibility;
- iii. Developing the position of the business due to a reason related to the organization;
- iv. To emphasize and enrich the financial structure and the power of the business.

Corporations prepare some strategic plans to reach some positions. At this point, the role of the corporate advertising has started. In this direction, the objectives of the corporate advertising have been listed as follows.

### **Aims of the Corporate Advertisement**

Corporate advertising has many aims. Those purposes may be listed as following:

- a. Providing awareness for a corporation.
- b. Creating a positive effect on the investments and security experts and show the financial power and stability of the corporation.
- c. Showing the corporation as a good employer, informing newly graduated ones and experienced administrators about the opportunities provided by the corporation, and encouraging them for applying to the corporation.
- d. Informing the public.
- e. Providing the introduction of corporation in the eye of distribution network, enhance the relations with the dealers.
- f. Motivating the employees.
- g. Creating a positive image and fame for the corporation.
- h. Reminding the political posts about the contributions of the corporation to the national economy.
- i. Reflecting the comprehension of the corporation to opinion leaders, pressure groups and local communities on social responsibility.
- j. Responding to the claims against the corporation and correct the misunderstandings.
- k. Announcing the corporation uniting with another corporation.
- l. Showing the public that it is a developing corporation.

- m. Announcing the change in the name of the corporation.
- n. Announcing the sponsorship agreements which the corporation conducted in various fields.
- o. Celebrating the anniversary of the corporation.

## **2. OVERVIEW OF ELECTIONS IN NIGERIA**

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It is an established fact that the success of any election must be supported with the integrity of credible voter registration because pre-election rigging includes the manipulation of the voter register, a document that is considered the foundation of a credible election (Banjo, 2023). The Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) is the electoral body in Nigeria responsible for organizing and conducting elections. INEC's primary mandate is to ensure free, fair, and credible elections in the country. Nigeria has a multi-party system, with the two major parties being the All Progressives Congress (APC) and the People's Democratic Party (PDP). Elections in Nigeria have been held regularly since the country's transition to democracy in 1999, following years of military rule. Historically, elections in Nigeria have faced challenges, including allegations of voter intimidation, violence, electoral fraud, and logistical issues. These challenges have sometimes raised concerns about the credibility and transparency of the electoral process (Osaghae, 2019).

Free and fair election is the benchmark of democracy. In other words, democracy implies that the people have the opportunity to decide who governs them. Regular elections offer people the opportunity to accept or refuse the men who are to govern them. It is free, fair elections that confirm the legitimacy of a government as well as withdraw legitimacy from one government, and gives it to the other. It is the political right enjoyed by the people to decide who should govern them in a free and fair election that separates democracy from any other kind of political system. Election is also a post mortem that investigates the record of office holders to ascertain whether they have kept faith with their

election promises or not (Durotoye, 2016; Adejumo et al., 2014).

Democracy is all about elections and choosing political leaders. A review of elections in Nigeria since independence reveals that election rigging has been a constant factor in Nigeria's democratic process. Osinachukwu & Jawan, 2011 examined election rigging and its effect on the democratic consolidation of Nigeria. Relying on the qualitative approach using data gathered from secondary sources as well as historical analysis by looking into the histories of election rigging in Nigeria from 1960 to 2007, they concluded that election rigging has hindered the emergence of democratic consolidation in Nigeria. Thereby, elections in Nigeria have not been able to bring about leadership change that will enforce accountability in leadership. "Election riggings in Nigeria were evident in 1964/1965, 1979, 1983, 1993, 1999, 2003 and 2007 general elections" (Osinachukwu & Jawan, 2011).

Electoral frauds include illegal printing of voters' cards, illegal possession of ballot boxes, stuffing of ballot boxes, falsification of election results, illegal thumb-printing of ballot papers, infant voting, compilation of fictitious names on voters' lists, illegal compilation of separate voters' lists, illegal printing of forms used for collection and declaration of election results, deliberate refusal to supply election materials to certain areas, announcing results in places where no elections were held, switching and unauthorized announcement of results, harassment of candidates, agents and voters, change of list of electoral officials, as well as box-inflation of figures, among others (Durotoye, 2016).

Apart from electoral fraud perpetrated by politicians and aided by the electoral umpires in some cases, there are many other challenges facing democratic consolidation in Nigeria which include the balkanization of the society along tribal and religious sentiments, the absence of true federalism, abject poverty, disjointed and manipulated (mis) information by the media, corruption, the politics of godfatherism and insecurity among many other factors (Kwasau, 2013).

The perennial problem of lack of credible and democratic electoral process has been linked with the phenomenon of "failed, uncaring and unresponsive governance" in Nigeria (Inokoba

& Kumokor, 2011). No wonder, the years of civil rule since 1999 failed to deliver on good roads, functioning health amenities, quality education, uninterrupted power supply, living wages for workers, effective petroleum sector, genuine electoral reform, equitable distribution of wealth and so on. Hence, Nigeria's democracy has been described as merely formalistic and devoid of substance (Inokoba & Kumokor, 2011).

However, efforts have been made over the years to improve the electoral system and address these challenges. The Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) is responsible for organizing and conducting elections in Nigeria and has taken steps to enhance the integrity of the electoral process. This includes the introduction of biometric voter registration and card readers to verify voters' identities and prevent multiple voting.

The introduction of the Bimodal Voter Accreditation System (BVAS) and the IReV for the 2023 elections was perceived as an important step to ensure the integrity and credibility of elections. However, delayed training of technical personnel, an inadequate mock testing exercise, and a lack of public information on the election technologies diminished expectations and left room for speculation and uncertainty. During the early stages of collation, presidential result forms from polling units was not displayed on the IReV, while Senate and House of Representative results were slowly published. Presidential election result forms started to be uploaded after 10 pm on election day, raising concerns and reaching only 20% by noon on February 26 (Banjo, 2023). Later the same evening, INEC explained the delay with "technical hitches." Among the 93.4 million registered voters, 9.5 million additional voters have registered ahead of the 2023 polls, of whom two-thirds were youth following mobilisation efforts during the registration period. Yet, the collection of permanent voter cards (PVC), a requirement to vote, was negatively affected by poor institutional planning. Two days before the elections, INEC stated that 93.3 per cent of PVCs were collected. Without an independent audit of the voter register, quality and inclusiveness could not be assured (Banjo, 2023).

### **3. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK: STRUCTURAL FUNCTIONALISM THEORY**

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This study is anchored on the Structural Functionalism Theory. Structural functionalism, or simply functionalism, is "a framework for building theory that sees society as a complex system whose parts work together to promote solidarity and stability." This approach looks at society through a macro-level orientation, which is a broad focus on the social structures that shape society as a whole, and believes that society has evolved like organisms (Macionis, 2011). This approach looks at both social structure and social functions. Functionalism addresses society as a whole in terms of the function of its constituent elements, namely norms, customs, traditions, and institutions. A common analogy, popularized by Herbert Spencer, presents these parts of society as "organs" that work toward the proper functioning of the "body" as a whole.

The origin of contemporary references to social structure can be traced to the French social scientist Émile Durkheim, who argued that parts of society are interdependent and that this interdependency imposes structure on the behaviour of institutions and their members. To Durkheim, the interrelations between the parts of society contributed to social unity - an integrated system with life characteristics of its own, exterior to individuals yet driving their behaviour.

According to Isajiw, 2000 it can be said that functional analysis studies structural items of the social system in an attempt to show how they contribute towards integration or inversely disintegration of the system by either fulfilling or failing to fulfil some needs or sets of needs of the system and in an attempt to show how these contributions bear on the existence of the item in the system.

As it is known, structural functionalism as a theory to the study of political phenomenon tries to explain the basic function of the political structures in the political system and it is also a tool of investigation. In essence, it explains the relationships between the parts (structures) on the one hand and between the parts and the

whole (political system) on the other hand. The relationship is explained in terms of the functions of each (Olaniyi, 2001).

INEC educates voters, stakeholders, political parties, and candidates running for various political offices about the need of an organized election process as part of its efforts to ensure peaceful, free, fair, and credible elections in Nigeria. This was accomplished by clearly outlining the organization's plans, strategies, and methods for achieving its objectives. The commission, which is a physical entity, played a part in ensuring free and fair elections that produced elected officials who reflected the will of the people.

In this regard, therefore, INEC's role in organizing elections and maintaining the integrity of the electoral process aligns with the functionalist perspective. It contributes to social stability, political order, and the functioning of Nigeria's democratic system by fulfilling essential functions related to representation, integration, conflict resolution, and legitimacy.

#### **4. CORPORATE ADVERTISING BY INDEPENDENT NATIONAL ELECTORAL COMMISSION (INEC) IN THE 2023 GENERAL ELECTIONS IN NIGERIA**

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Independent National Electoral Commission's (INEC) activities during the 2023 General Elections in Nigeria.

The INEC's practices and policies may have evolved since then. During general elections, it is common for electoral commissions to engage in various forms of communication and public outreach to ensure that citizens are informed about the election process, voter registration, and their rights and responsibilities. This typically includes activities such as voter education campaigns, public service announcements, dissemination of election-related information through traditional and digital media channels, and collaboration with civil society organizations to promote civic engagement.

INEC engage in corporate advertising to promote their causes, raise awareness about their mission and programs, attract support and voters' participation, and generate public interest

and engagement. Corporate advertising by non-profit organizations aims to create a positive image, establish credibility, and communicate the organization's impact and value to the community. Here are some common forms of corporate advertising used by INEC in the 2023 General Elections in Nigeria:

- i. **Public service announcements (PSAs):** INEC often collaborate with media outlets to air or publish PSAs that convey important messages or highlight social issues. These announcements are typically aired or published free of charge. For example, public announcement on date and venue for continue voters registration and collection of Permanent Voters Card (PVC)
- ii. **Sponsorship and partnerships:** INEC usually seek partnerships with businesses and organizations, leveraging their advertising resources and channels to promote their cause. This can include joint marketing campaigns, co-branded advertisements, or event sponsorships. For example, musicians and celebrities partner with INEC to promote the campaign against vote buying and vote selling and the need for voters to collect their PVCs.
- iii. **Interviews:** INEC officials can participate in interviews with media outlets to discuss the commission's activities, achievements, and plans. This helps create transparency, build credibility, and provide accurate information to the public. Interviews can be conducted on television, radio, or in print media.
- iv. **Press Releases:** INEC can issue press releases to disseminate important announcements, updates, and key information related to electoral processes. Press releases can be distributed to media organizations and published on the INEC website, providing journalists and the public with reliable and timely information (see example as appendix).
- v. **Feature Articles:** INEC can collaborate with media outlets or publish its own feature articles to highlight its achievements, innovations, and initiatives. These articles can provide in-depth insights into the commission's work, its positive impact on democracy, and the importance of voter participation.

- vi. **Documentaries:** Producing and broadcasting documentaries that showcase INEC's role in organizing successful elections, voter education campaigns, and community engagement efforts can help enhance the commission's reputation. Documentaries can be aired on television or shared on online platforms for free.
- vii. **Banners, Posters, and Billboards:** INEC can use visually appealing banners, posters, and billboards strategically placed in public spaces to promote key messages, such as the importance of voter registration, participation, and election dates. These visual displays can effectively reach a wide audience and serve as reminders during election periods.
- viii. **Town Hall Meetings:** Organizing town hall meetings allows INEC to engage directly with citizens, political stakeholders, civil society organizations, and community leaders. These meetings provide a platform for INEC to address concerns, provide clarifications, and gather feedback from the public, thereby fostering transparency and building trust.
- ix. **Social Media and Digital Platforms:** INEC can leverage social media platforms and its official website to share updates, educational materials, and interactive content. Engaging with the public through social media allows for real-time communication, responding to inquiries, and addressing concerns promptly.

## 5. CONCLUSIONS

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Every organization, whether profit or non-profit, cannot succeed without a positive corporate image. A corporate image that is unknown or misconceived is dangerous for the prosperity of an organization like INEC. To effectively communicate the valid corporate image, advertisement has been examined as a tool for reducing the assumption level of all the stakeholders. The effect of advertising on the corporate image is extremely vital in any organization, due to the fact that it stimulates consumer demand for their product or services, which eventually lead to increase in sales or

patronage level, hence result in high profit or good reputation.

Overall, corporate advertising in Nigeria is a strategic tool employed by organizations to build brand awareness, shape brand image, foster customer loyalty, and promote their social responsibility initiatives. It serves as a powerful means of communication to reach a wider audience and establish a strong market presence. Through effective corporate advertising, organizations can position themselves as trustworthy, socially responsible, and desirable choices among well-meaning Nigerians

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