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## **A Content Analysis of Three Nigerian Newspapers' Adherence to Select ARCON Codes**

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## **Abstract**

The integrity of advertising rests on the level of compliance of its practitioners to stipulated codes of ethics that guide the advertising business. This study assessed the level of compliance of three Nigerian newspapers to the advertising codes stipulated by the Advertising Regulatory Council of Nigeria (ARCON). Specifically, compliance to five key codes: employment and business opportunities, drugs, identity, price, and competing products were content analyzed in *The Nation*, the *Daily Sun* and the *Vanguard* from January to December 2021. Results showed a significant breach of these advertising codes by the three newspapers. Specific cases of breaches of ARCON Code uncovered included failure on a number of occasions to fully identify the advertiser, use of wrong sign off, outright omission of sign off, failure to include prices of advertised products, etc. Consequently, we argue that the Nigerian mass media should be more socially responsible by vetting all advertisements before publication. This is to shore up the present low level of adherence to ARCON codes reported in the study. The work broadens our understanding of the level of media's compliance to advertising regulations in an African context.

**Keywords:** *Advertising codes, Nigerian newspapers, Content analysis, Ethics, ARCON*

## **Introduction**

Advertising is critical to business success (Zhao et al. 2022; Hassan 2024). The goal of advertising is to persuade the targets to patronize the advertised product or service (Setyadi et al. 2024; Mishra et al. 2024). These advertisements are delivered via a vehicle, a pipeline that transports it to the intended audience, and the media are that pipeline. Among the media of advertising is the newspaper. It is one of the oldest means of advertising and the most trusted (Klein, 2022; Coda Ventures 2024; Berrier 2025). Newspaper is a universal medium and is read by literate members of society. Because of the wide range of interests of the readers, newspapers are especially suitable for advertising services and goods that are in widespread use.

Besides, newspapers combine adaptability with timeliness, flexibility, targeted demographic, and engaged audience to deliver maximum returns to advertisers. Advertisements for newspapers can be written, laid out, and planned in a matter of hours. Newspapers are an ideal medium for responding to current events or conveying timely information to consumers due to their short production cycle and closing dates. They can be produced and distributed in a variety of sizes, shapes, and formats, including special inserts or colors to pique readers' interest. They are highly affordable

to both small and big businesses (Lin et al. 2022; ProfileTree 2024; Indeed 2025). Newspaper advertisements are permanent.

Advertising does not exist in isolation. One of the characteristics that distinguishes advertising as a profession is that it is subject to regulations, which are enforced often by the government or recognized regulatory agencies to check unethical behaviors, including misleading and potentially hazardous advertising and product mislabeling, among other things. All this is targeted at entrenching professionalism.

A majority of nations have established or accredited specific authorities to govern the practice of advertising in their respective jurisdictions. In the United States of America, for instance, the Federal Trade Commission (FTC) has the authority to take action against deceptive advertising, based on consumer and competitor complaints. Similarly, the Advertising Standards Authority (ASA), which is a self-regulatory body in the United Kingdom, investigates complaints and actively monitors the media in order to penalize misleading, hurtful, or offensive commercials, sales promotions, and direct marketing.

Nigeria has two of such regulatory bodies: The Advertising Regulatory Council of Nigeria (ARCON), formerly known as the Advertising Practitioners Council of Nigeria (APCON), and the Nigerian Broadcasting Commission (NBC) (Ijewere and Obeki 2011). These two regulators have, as part of their operations, enacted codes (the ARCON Code and the NBC Code) that are regarded as the major advertising regulatory apparatus in Nigeria (Ukah 2011; Nworgu 2011; Ijewere and Obeki 2011).

The APCON, established by Decree 55 of 1988, has the mandate of promoting responsible and ethical advertising practices, acting as the conscience of society and safeguarding consumers' interest as well as protecting the interests of all stakeholders in Nigeria's advertising industry (Nworgu 2011). Prior to the enactment of Decree 55 of 1988, as amended by Decree 93 of 1992, Act 116 of 1993 and now Act No. 23 of 2022 (which gave birth to ARCON), the profession saw an influx of quacks who engaged in unethical behavior through the content of their advertisement copy and relationships with clients, the media, and contractors (Okiyi and Eteng 2015). From the foregoing, it is clear that Nigeria has taken the right steps to improve and sanitize advertising practice with the enactment of ARCON Act in August 2022.

Despite the establishment of APCON and ARCON and the codes enacted, some Nigerian manufacturers continue to use deceptive advertising and mislabeling of products in their advertising campaigns. According to Ijewere and Obeki (2011), a lot of Nigerian manufacturers, middlemen, and advertisers have developed the technique of attaching

foreign labels to Nigerian-made goods or employing exaggerated and misleading advertising claims. However, they are rarely held accountable for their actions, neither are they sued for misleading the public, in contrast to the United States of America where the FTC is known to be more aggressive in sanctioning erring advertisers, often with heavy fines (Martin and O'Connor 2011; Rath 2017).

Prior studies have evaluated adherence to advertising ethics in Nigeria (Olatunji and Adekunle 2011; Bakara and Ogundele 2021; Okocha 2023; Adeyemi et al. 2024). Other studies have focused on influence of advertising on patronage of products and services (Setyadi et al. 2024; Gani 2024; Silayo and Mtallo 2024; Jemal and Melese 2025). There has been a dearth of studies on newspaper adherence to ARCON regulations. Furthermore, the aspects of advertisements investigated in the present study, namely, employment and business opportunities, drugs, identity, price, and competing products have received scant communication research attention. It is against this backdrop that this study analyzed three Nigerian newspaper's adherence to the preceding ARCON codes.

## **Research Questions**

1. To what extent do the newspapers adhere to ARCON's code on advertisement of employment and business opportunities?
2. How often do newspaper advertisements comply with ARCON's code on not promising cure in drug advertisements?
3. To what extent do Nigerian newspapers adhere to ARCON code on identity in publication of advertisements?
4. How often do newspaper organizations comply with ARCON's code on price in the publication of advertisements?
5. What is the level of adherence to ARCON's code on the placement of competing or similar products and services' advertisements in the newspapers?

## **Literature Review**

### **Conceptual Review**

#### ***Select ARCON Ethics that Relates to the Study***

1. **Article 12: Identity:** "Advertisements soliciting patronage or reaction shall show the correct name of the advertiser as well as a street address where personal calls can be made to ascertain the genuineness of the claims contained in the advertisement. Media organizations shall not accept nor expose advertisements that do not indicate the proper identity of the sponsor except in teaser advertisements. Advertisements

may not include signoffs such as 'committee of friends,' 'concerned citizens,' or any other broad terms that do not include verifiable names and addresses."

2. **Article 87: Employment and Business opportunities**

**87 (A):** "Before publication, media shall demand full details of the advertisers and any terms and conditions imposed on respondents."

**87 (C):** "An employment agency shall make clear in advertising communications its full name and contact details and the fact that it is an employment agency, if the name does not disclose the fact."

**87 (E)** Advertising for Business Opportunities shall contain:

i. "The full name and geographical address of the advertisers, not a P.O. Box or P.M.B. address.

ii. "A clear description of the work involved and the extent of investor's commitments, including any financial investment; the support available shall not be exaggerated.

iii. "No unrepresentative or exaggerated earning figures. Advertisers may include that information in follow-up literature made available to all consumers before commitment but the initial advertising communication shall normally state if an advertisement is required."

3. **Article 60: Elimination of Ailment:** "Advertisements for drugs shall not contain a claim to cure any ailment or symptoms of ill health, nor shall any advertisement for drugs contain a word or expression or impression suggesting the elimination of any ailment, illness or disease."

4. **Article 16: Competing products:** "Two or more advertisements for competing or similar products or services shall not be placed adjacent to each other in print, outdoor, or electronic media." These are products that have same usage. Examples of such products are: Oral B, Close up, Colgate, Maclean, all toothpaste. Therefore, advertisements placed in newspapers about these products should not be adjacent to each other.

5. **Article 17: Price:** "Advertisers and agencies are encouraged to indicate the prices of products or services in their advertisements."

## **Review of Related Studies**

Olatunji and Adekunle (2011) investigated the extent to which newspaper organizations

adhered to legal and ethical guidelines on printing political advertisements with respect to the 2007 presidential election in Nigeria. Three Nigerian national dailies, *The Guardian*, *ThisDay*, and *The Punch*, were studied for a three-month period (February – April 2007), immediately after the election date. The findings revealed non-adherence by newspaper organizations to ethical and legal guidelines on political advertisements as well as the inability of regulatory agencies to sanction violators of these guidelines. Also, only half of the newspaper advertisements studied had identified sponsors; the ads concentrated on topics that may not be immediately relevant to the needs of the electorate; burning societal problems were neglected; ads were predominately image-boosting for politicians.

Similarly, Adibe et al. (2015) did a study to evaluate information content of drug advertisements and promotion materials in Nigeria. Specifically, their aim was to evaluate the physical characteristics and the comprehensiveness of information found in drug leaflets, packaging and promotional brochures. They found that information conveyed in some ads exaggerated the benefits of the drug and downplayed associated risks, while aiming at increasing sales.

In a similar study, Zetterqvist and Mulinari (2013) analyzed all antidepressant ads in the *Swedish Medical Journal* from 1994–2003. The regulation of these ads was examined using case studies from self-regulatory organizations. The study also examined the level and response of unethical advertising, pattern of code violations, the pervasiveness of and oversight over claims about antidepressant efficacy and disease causality, and the costs for manufacturers involved in unethical advertising. Numerous code breaches were reported in the study. It was found that 34% of the ads violated industry standards.

In the same vein, Akram et al. (2015) investigated ads on medicines and treatments in 10 Indian dailies. The study was aimed at assessing the logic, sincerity, and compliance with Indian laws of advertisements for drugs and treatments that appeared in these newspapers from September to November 2012. The 82 analyzed advertisements in the dailies centered on pharmaceuticals for sexual pleasure, menstruation difficulties, arthritis, hair problems, weight reduction, male infertility, height increase, breast enlargement, and leukoderma. Findings showed that 77 of the 82 advertisements violated the Drugs and Magic Remedies Act and provisions of Schedule J of the Drugs and Cosmetics Act of India.

In a related study done in India, Devi et al. (2010) investigated consumers' demand of ethics by sampling 125 respondents. Results showed that businesses are ignoring their

ethical responsibilities by engaging in unethical advertising, as 81% of advertisements were unethical. Also, 32.4% of respondents were of the opinion that unethical advertisements should be banned, 23.2% said licenses of erring businesses should be withdrawn, while 21.6% wanted regulating bodies to enforce strict compliance to ethics in advertising. The study recommended that ethics should be adhered to and sentiments in advertising should be avoided.

Also, Gitanjali et al. (1997) studied drug ads in Indian and British medical journals. They studied 116 ads from pharmaceutical companies in five issues of the Indian edition of the *British Medical Journal* (August to December 1992) and 87 ads from four issues of the British edition of the same journal in 1993. Their objective was to find out if drug ads provided dosage, indications for treatment, precautions, contradictions, adverse effects, price, the postal address of the manufacturing company, and whether the claims made in the ads were referenced. They found that 16% of the generic name was absent in the Indian ads and none of the British; scientific information was inadequate in 20% of the Indian editions and 3% of the British. For India, 66% of the ads had an address for further information, while the figure was 92% for the British. Findings also showed 66% and 97% mentioned the prices of drugs for Indian and British advertisements respectively. The study established that all advertisements from the Indian editions “were misleading or made unsubstantiated claims.”

Zaman and Mahmood (2015) assessed ethical issues, ethical misconducts in celebrity endorsers and ethical problems in content and message of ads. A total of 300 students were sampled at 12 universities in Islamabad and Rawalpindi, Pakistan. The results of advertising appeal and advertising message indicated that 66 percent of respondents rejected the prevailing unethical practices of the media and advertisers in Pakistan. Respondents suggested that marketers and advertisers should be more ethical and pay heed to Pakistan’s cultural values.

Huq et al. (2016) conducted a study on unethical advertising practices in Bangladesh. The objectives of the study were to create awareness about the unethical practices of advertising, to examine the status quo of unethical advertising and how to curb unethical practices in Bangladesh. The findings revealed that most companies use unethical practices to increase product sales and that the majority of businesses do not adhere to the ethical standard in advertising. Also, they reported that consumers were deceived with false advertising copy. They recommended ethical practices in the production and placement of advertisements in the media.

From the array of studies reviewed across the globe, deceptive advertising appears to

persist in different nations of the world, underscoring the necessity for advertisers to be ethically minded in their practice. As businesses continue to rely on advertising to sell their products and services through the media, this study provides an added value to available literature by studying newspaper adherence to ARCON regulations such as principle of identity, price, business and employment opportunities, drugs advertisements and advertisements of competing or similar products and services.

### **Theoretical Framework**

The study is hinged on the deontological theory and the social responsibility theory.

#### **Deontological Ethical Theory**

This theory was propounded by a German moral philosopher, Immanuel Kant. It arose from enlightened rationalism, which said that an activity can only be right if its maxim and responsibility to the moral law stem from a sense of duty in action. The thesis is founded on the idea that ethical obligations must be obeyed regardless of the situation. In current moral philosophy, deontology is a type of normative theory that describes which options are ethically obligatory, banned, or acceptable (Heuer 2011). It states that the morality of an action is determined only by its compliance with some rules or principles. If an act is not in compliance with the law, it should not be carried out, no matter how beneficial or good it may be. This theory is considered relevant to this study because it requires advertising practitioners to adhere to the ethical provisions of the advertising regulatory bodies at all times, regardless of the situation.

#### **Social Responsibility Theory**

The main assumption of this theory is that the media should be unfettered in the discharge their duties, but that such freedom should be matched with responsibility (Okunna and Omenugha 2012). This theory is also concerned with being ethical. It requires media practitioners and advertisers to adhere to ethical rules and professional standards. According to Uzuegbunam (2013), the social responsibility theory gave rise to professional media associations and regulatory bodies such as ARCON, which set ethical codes and standards of practice to enhance professionalism among advertising practitioners in Nigeria. The social responsibility idea is particularly pertinent to this study since it also emphasizes the necessity for media practitioners as well as advertisers to practice responsibly. Responsible practice of advertising implies adherence to ethical codes and set guidelines.

### **Methodology**

The study applies content analysis to assess three Nigerian newspapers' adherence to

ARCON guidelines for the following categories of advertisements: employment and business opportunities, drugs, identity, price, and competing products. The choice of these newspapers (*The Nation, Daily Sun, and Vanguard*) was predicated on the following criteria: national coverage and circulation, popularity, and consistency of production. Given that each paper is circulated around the country, they are among the newspapers of choice for product and service advertisers in Nigeria. Nigeria has a thriving advertising industry. Advertising in Nigeria is projected to be worth more than \$1 trillion, or more than 2% of the country's GDP (Akinde 2021) and newspapers attract a large chunk of this advertising revenue (Ekwuru 2016; Statista 2024). In fact, newspaper ad spending in Nigeria is projected to hit US \$ 27. 94m in 2025 (Statista 2024). Given the wide range of readers' interests, newspapers are especially suitable for advertising goods and services that are in widespread use. Newspapers can give highly specific product information as well as successfully engage users through visuals (Belch and Belch 2012).

The study covers a one-year period, January to December 2021. This period is considered adequate to gain relevant insight into the level of compliance of newspapers to ARCON code of ethics. The total editions of the papers published and circulated within the study period equals 1,095 editions. The constructed weeks method was used to arrive at the actual sample size to be studied, with one week representing each month of the year. The days in the constructed weeks were chosen through simple random sampling, thereby helping to eliminate researcher bias (Ohaja 2003). Using the constructed weeks, 84 editions of each daily were selected, totaling 252 editions in all. (See Appendix 1.)

### **Content Categories**

The content categories for the study include types of advertisement published; and frequency of advertisement:

- 1. *Employment and Business opportunity*:** Frequency of Employment and Business Opportunities Advertisements; Name of advertiser; Geographical address; Contact address; Sign off
- 2. *Elimination of ailments*:** Frequency of drug advertisements; A word to suggest the elimination or cure of ailments; Names of advertised drugs suggesting cure of ailments
- 3. *Identity*:** Frequency of product advertisements; Name of advertiser; Address of advertiser; Use of signoff

4. **Price:** Number of product and service advertisements soliciting patronage; Indication of prices; Non-indication of prices
5. **Competing products:** Total number of competing or similar products and services; Adjacent placement of competing or similar products and services; Proper placement of competing or similar products and services.

### Unit of Analysis/ Measuring Instrument and Inter-coder Reliability

The unit of analysis for the study are advertisements (in the categories earlier identified) published in the newspapers. The measuring instrument was a code sheet validated by two communication research experts. Coding was by two independent coders. The inter-coder reliability was calculated using Holsti's formula, and it yielded an acceptable co-efficient of .90. To establish frequencies, data was subjected to descriptive analyses.

### Findings

First, we analyze types and frequency of advertisements. Results are presented in Table 1.

Table 1: Type and Frequency of Advertisements

Type of advertisements	<i>The Nation</i>		<i>Daily Sun</i>		<i>Vanguard</i>	
	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage
Product advertisements	91	4.1	82	4.8	95	1.9
Competing products	23	1.0	3	0.2	28	0.6
Employment and business opportunities	103	4.6	52	3.0	118	2.4
Birthdays	143	6.4	43	2.5	155	3.2
Obituaries	43	1.9	49	2.8	142	2.9
Change of name	1462	65.6	1288	74.9	4118	84.1
Others	365	16.4	203	11.8	242	4.9
Total	2230	100	1720	100	4898	100

Classified and displayed advertisements were found in the newspapers. These advertisements include: product advertisements (cars, phones, printing machines, land and photocopying machines), employment and business opportunities (job vacancies, expression of interests and bids), competing products and services (service providers, banks and phones). There were also birthdays, obituaries and change of names. Others included admissions, awards, confirmation of age, correction of dates of births, public notices, loss of properties, and caveat emptor, signaling that buyer should apply their

discretion.

**RQ1:** To what extent do the newspapers adhere to ARCON’s code on advertisement of employment and business opportunities?

A total of 273 advertisements on employment and business opportunities were coded in the newspapers studied. One hundred and three (37.7%) of these advertisements were published in *The Nation* newspaper, while *Daily Sun* contained 52 (19.1%) of these advertisements; the *Vanguard* had 118 (43.2%). Table 2 presents extent of compliance with ARCON requirements for employment and business opportunities advertisements by the newspapers.

Table 2: Compliance with requirements for employment and business opportunities advertisements

Requirements	<i>The Nation</i>		<i>Daily Sun</i>		<i>Vanguard</i>		Total	%
	Frequency	%	Frequency	%	Frequency	%		
Full name	98	41.2	47	19.7	93	39.1	238	100
Geographical address	93	44.7	31	14.9	84	40.4	208	100
Contact address	69	31.4	38	17.3	113	51.4	220	100
Description of work	103	38.7	52	19.6	110	42.6	265	100
Correct sign off	32	34.4	18	19.4	43	46.2	93	100
Wrong sign off	48	50.0	19	19.8	29	30.2	96	100
No signoff	23	27.4	15	17.9	46	54.8	84	100

From Table 2, data shows that out of the 273 advertisements earlier coded in this category, 238 had names of advertisers (35 breaches), 208 had geographical addresses (65 breaches), 220 had contact addresses (53 breaches), 265 described the nature of jobs (8 breaches), 93 had correct sign offs (180 breaches), and while 96 of these advertisements had wrong sign offs, and 84 of these advertisements had no sign off, an infringement of ARCON code. For advertisements that included the contact addresses of advertisers, the *Vanguard* had the highest with 113 (51.4%), while *The Nation* had the lowest with 69 (31.4%). In terms of description of work, all advertisements found in *The Nation* and *Daily Sun* totally met the requirements, while some advertisements found in the *Vanguard* complied with the requirements. Finally, the majority of advertisements published in the three newspapers had wrong sign offs. This is an indication that some of the requirements were met while others were breached.

**RQ2:** How often do newspaper advertisements comply with ARCON’s code on not

promising cure in drug advertisements?

No drug advertisement was found in the newspapers studied.

**RQ3:** To what extent do Nigerian newspapers adhere to ARCON code on identity in publication of advertisements?

A total of 268 product and service advertisements were found in the three newspapers. The *Vanguard* published the highest number with 95 (35%), followed by *The Nation* with 91 (34%), while 82 (30.6%) were published in the *Daily Sun*. Table 3 presents the level of compliance with requirements for the principle of identity.

Table 3: Compliance with requirements for the principle of identity

Requirement	<i>The Nation</i>		<i>Daily Sun</i>		<i>Vanguard</i>		Total	%
	Frequency	%	Frequency	%	Frequency	%		
Name of advertiser	91	34.5	79	29.9	94	35.6	264	100
Street address	88	45.4	41	21.1	65	33.5	194	100
Use of sign off	73	40.8	28	15.6	78	43.6	179	100
No sign off	18	20.2	54	60.7	17	19.1	89	100

Table 3 reflects requirements for products and services advertisements. From the table, 264 out of 268 advertisements had names of advertisers. Eighty-eight (45%) of advertisements published in *The Nation* included street addresses of advertisers; for *Daily Sun*, the number was 41 (21.1%) while for the *Vanguard*, it was 65 (33.6%). Also, 179 out of 264 advertisements had signoffs. Seventy-three of these advertisements were published in *The Nation*, while 28 came from *Daily Sun* and 78 were found in the *Vanguard*.

**RQ 4:** How often do newspaper organizations comply with ARCON's code on price in the publication of advertisements?

Table 4 shows the frequency distribution of advertisements soliciting patronage which should include the price of the advertised product or service.

Table 4: Frequency distribution of advertisements soliciting patronage in the three newspapers

Newspaper	Frequency	Percentage
<i>The Nation</i>	31	29
<i>Daily Sun</i>	39	36.4
<i>Vanguard</i>	37	34.6
Total	107	100

Results show that the newspapers published 107 advertisements soliciting patronage.

Thirty-one (29%) of these advertisements were found in *The Nation*, while 39(36.4%) were published in *Daily Sun* and 37(34.6%) were published in the *Vanguard*. All three newspapers violated this code. Table 5 presents requirements and information for the principle of price.

Table 5: Compliance vs non-compliance with the requirement for inclusion of prices

<b>Requirement</b>	<b><i>The Nation</i> (%)</b>		<b><i>Daily Sun</i> (%)</b>		<b><i>Vanguard</i> (%)</b>	
Indication of prices	19	61.3	25	64.4	27	73
Non-indication of prices	12	38.7	14	35.9	10	27
Total	31	100	39	100	37	100

Table 5 shows that out of 31 advertisements found in *The Nation*, 19 (61.3%) indicated the prices of items advertised, while 12 (38.7) had no advertised priced. Also, of the 39 advertisements found in the *Daily Sun*, 25 (64.4%) indicated the prices of items, while 14 (35.9%) had no advertised prices. Lastly, out of the 37 advertisements of products and services soliciting patronage in the *Vanguard*, 27 (73%) indicated the prices of items, while 10 (27%) had no advertised prices. This simply shows that most of these advertisements had advertised prices while some had no advertised prices. Most the advertisements found in this category were basically from banks.

**RQ 5:** What is the level of adherence to ARCON’s code on the placement of competing or similar products and services’ advertisements in the newspapers?

First, we coded for how many times advertisement of competing or similar products and services appeared in each of the dailies. A total of 54 advertisements were coded. Results indicated that the *Vanguard* had the majority of the advertisements in this category, with a total of 28 (51.8%), followed by *The Nation* with 23 (42.6%), while the *Daily Sun* had the least with 3 (5.6%). Table 6 presents the level of adherence to ARCON codes for advertisements in this category.

Table 6: Compliance with requirements for advertisements of competing products and services

<b>Requirement</b>	<b><i>The Nation</i></b>		<b><i>Daily Sun</i></b>		<b><i>Vanguard</i></b>	
	Frequency	%	Frequency	%	Frequency	%
Adjacent placement of similar products & services	0	0	0	0	21	75
Proper placement of these advertisements	23	100	3	100	7	25
Total	23	100	3	100	28	100

Table 6 revealed that all 23 advertisements published in *The Nation* were properly placed while for the *Vanguard*, only 7 (25%) were properly placed and 21 (75%) were adjacently placed in violation of the code.

### **Discussion of Findings**

The findings for the first research question show that advertisements of employment and business opportunities are not totally in compliance with ARCON provision for such advertisements, especially in the area of geographical addresses (Table 2). Most advertisements from single individuals usually occupied very small columns, excluded geographical addresses, and breached this code than those from government offices, churches, and schools. In advertising employment and business opportunities, lack of full details from advertisers in newspapers can lead to life-threatening situations and fraud. The media are the people's voice; whatever is published in the media is assumed to be true because there is an expectation that details were confirmed before publication. The media are expected to provide complete details about advertisers. Some people have been killed, raped, or defrauded in search of jobs. It is extremely dangerous for any advertiser to post a job opening without including their full details. However, Amponsah (2022) argues that it is not wrong for a company to remain anonymous for recruitment purposes. According to her, companies do that for the purpose of confidentiality, and to avoid unnecessary calls from members of the public.

With respect to drug advertisements, which the second research question was based on, the newspapers studied had no drug advertisements; therefore, the researchers could not analyze any advertisement to determine adherence to, or violations of, ARCON code of ethics. One factor possibly responsible for this could be that drug advertisers prefer the broadcast media because of its audio-visual advantage.

Findings from the third research question showed that the majority of these advertisements complied with this regulation since out of 268 advertisements, 264, 194, and 179 included names of advertisers, street addresses and signoffs respectively (Table 3). This confirms a finding from the study, Olatunji and Adekunle (2011) on the role of newspaper advertisement in the democratic process, which reported that the majority of newspaper advertisements had identified sponsors.

It was found from research question four that some products and services' advertisements soliciting patronage had advertised prices while some had no advertised prices (Table 4), even when they were not teaser advertisements. Simester's (1995) study on signaling price image using advertised price showed that consumers are often poorly informed about the prices and attributes of products they buy, and as a result,

consumers have to go extra miles to stores in order to confirm the prices of products thereby increasing their expenses. Also, a study carried out in 1992 by Abernethy and Butler on advertising information, services versus products, reported that 68% of advertisements included price information. Exclusion of advertised prices leads to the purchase of the same products at different prices, resulting in extortion of customers. That is why section 74:05 of the Competition Act (Competition Bureau Canada) prohibits the sale or rental of a product above the advertised price.

For the fifth research question, there were few advertisements on similar or competing products, and results showed that *The Nation* and the *Daily Sun* adhered to ARCON'S provision guiding the production and placement of advertisements of such products (Table 6), while the *Vanguard* breached the code on a majority of occasions (75%). Some scholars argue that advertisements of similar products confuse the target audience and lead to comparison of products. Burke and Srull (1998) studied the competitive interference and consumer memory for advertising. They found that similarity of brands and their advertising can cause difficulty for consumers in retrieving the specific characteristics of individual brands from memory as well as the possibility of creating confusion of the recalled brands and attributes, and brand associations.

### **Conclusion and Recommendations**

This study has established a significant breach of ARCON advertising code of ethics by the newspapers studied. While the extent of generalization of findings is limited because of the scope of the present study, more studies are required to gain a more comprehensive understanding of how the Nigerian mass media in general have fared as regards the level of compliance to advertising guidelines. We argue that the Nigerian mass media should be more socially responsible by vetting all advertisements before publication. This is to shore up the present low level of adherence to ARCON codes reported in the study. It is recommended that ARCON sensitize advertising practitioners on the importance of adhering to its ethical codes, and also monitor advertisements. In cases of extreme violation of its code, ARCON should sanction erring media organizations to uphold established standards of practice. Further studies should be conducted to ascertain factors that lead to unethical advertisements. Considering the importance of drugs, a survey should be conducted on drug advertisements in the broadcast media. Cross-country studies are required to gain a broader understanding of how the media in various African countries have fared with regard to compliance with advertising codes to be able to establish the degree of professionalism of ad practitioners on the continent.

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## Appendix 1

### Selection and the Sample Size (Constructed Weeks)

Months	Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
January	10	18	19	27	21	15	2
February	28	7	28	10	25	26	20
March	20	8	30	24	4	12	14
April	11	26	20	28	29	30	3
May	9	17	11	26	6	21	1
June	13	21	1	16	24	18	26
July	25	12	6	7	8	2	17
August	8	16	3	18	5	13	21
September	12	6	21	8	23	24	4
October	3	18	12	6	28	8	9
November	7	1	30	17	25	19	27
December	18	6	7	8	2	10	25