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# Transforming Nigeria Through Advertising Education: A Searchlight on the Role of The Advertising Regulatory Council of Nigeria

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**Abstract**

This study examines the role of advertising education in Nigeria and the extent to which the Advertising Regulatory Council of Nigeria (ARCON) participates in the design, accreditation and quality assurance of advertising programmes in Nigerian tertiary institutions. Adopting a narrative literature review approach, the study searched Google Scholar as its primary academic database, supplemented by a general web search used only to locate institutional and grey literature such as ARCON policy documents and professional-body reports. The search covered publications from 1998 to 2025, using combinations of the terms "advertising education," "ARCON," "advertising regulation Nigeria," "accreditation of advertising programmes," and "curriculum development in Nigerian tertiary institutions." An initial pool of 102 records was screened by title and abstract for relevance to the study objectives; after removing duplicates and sources outside the study's scope, 20 sources were retained for full review and were synthesised thematically around four analytical strands: professional regulation, human-capital formation, curriculum governance and market development. The review finds that ARCON performs several functions relevant to advertising education, including practitioner certification, capacity-building through seminars and workshops, and accreditation of tertiary institutions offering advertising-related courses, although the literature consistently reports that accreditation of advertising-specific curricula remains inconsistently applied. The review further finds that certification distinguishes registered advertising professionals from unregistered practitioners, and that ARCON's seminars and workshops provide graduates of advertising-related programmes with practical and entrepreneurial skills. The study concludes that while ARCON has contributed meaningfully to advertising education in Nigeria, its accreditation function requires closer institutional coordination with the National Universities Commission (NUC) and the National Board for Technical Education (NBTE). It recommends that ARCON formalise a collaborative accreditation arrangement with the NUC for advertising programmes in Nigerian universities.

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**Keywords:** Advertising education; ARCON; Professional regulation; Curriculum accreditation; Nigerian tertiary institutions.

## Introduction

Advertising is widely credited with contributing to economic activity, consumer information and media sustainability in Nigeria. Scholars argue that advertising stimulates patronage for goods and services, which in turn supports industrial output, government revenue and employment (Nwamara & Anyanwu, 2020). It is also described as a source of consumer information, helping audiences make more informed choices about products and services. In addition, advertising revenue is frequently identified as a major source of income for Nigerian media houses, with implications for editorial quality and staff welfare.

Beyond its commercial function, advertising has also been used for developmental and public-interest purposes in Nigeria, including government campaigns on privatisation policy and public health issues such as HIV awareness (Ayozie, 2019). These uses illustrate why advertising is often framed, in the literature, as a tool with relevance beyond the market.

The practice of advertising in Nigeria has, however, been shaped by a specific and sometimes confusing regulatory history. Prior to 1988, advertising in Nigeria was largely unregulated, and this absence of oversight was associated with unethical practice and misleading claims. The Advertising Practitioners Council of Nigeria (APCON) was established by Decree No. 55 of 1988 to regulate the practice of advertising and set professional standards. APCON operated under this framework, later consolidated as the Advertising Practitioners (Registration, etc.) Act, Cap. A7, Laws of the Federation of Nigeria 2004, until August 2022, when the Advertising Regulatory Council of Nigeria Act 2022 was enacted. The 2022 Act repealed the APCON Act and replaced APCON with the Advertising Regulatory Council of Nigeria (ARCON) as the apex regulatory authority for advertising, advertisements and marketing communication in Nigeria. It is therefore accurate to describe ARCON as the successor body to APCON.

By virtue of its statutory mandate, ARCON registers and accredits advertising practitioners and agencies, enforces the Code of Advertising Practice, and promotes professional development through training, seminars and workshops. Because education and training are central to how new entrants are prepared for registration, ARCON's role necessarily extends into the domain of advertising education in Nigerian tertiary institutions. Yet the specific extent and effectiveness of ARCON's involvement in curriculum design and accreditation of advertising programmes at the tertiary level has not been systematically documented. This gap — between ARCON's broad statutory mandate and the more limited, uneven evidence on its actual involvement in tertiary advertising education — is the specific problem this study addresses.

## Objectives of the Study

The broad objective of this study is to examine the role of ARCON in advertising education in Nigerian tertiary institutions. Specifically, the study seeks to:

1. examine the nature of advertising education — including curriculum structure, mode of delivery and accreditation status — in Nigerian tertiary institutions;

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2. assess the level of ARCON's involvement in the design and accreditation of advertising education programmes in Nigerian tertiary institutions; and
3. evaluate ARCON's contribution to advertising education in Nigerian tertiary institutions.

**Method**

This study adopts a narrative literature review design. A narrative review was considered appropriate because the objectives call for a thematic synthesis of a relatively small and heterogeneous body of Nigeria-specific literature on advertising education and regulation, rather than a pooled quantitative estimate of an effect. The review does not follow a systematic-review protocol (e.g., PRISMA), and this limitation is acknowledged; the procedure below is reported as transparently as the review design allows so that it can be followed by other researchers.

The literature search was conducted between 3 and 28 November 2025. Google Scholar was used as the primary academic database. A general web search (Google) was used only as a supplementary source to locate institutional and grey literature — specifically ARCON's own publications, JAMB brochures and professional-body reports — that are not indexed in academic databases. Findings from this grey-literature supplement are identified as such in the review and are not treated as peer-reviewed evidence.

Searches combined the terms “advertising education Nigeria,” “role of ARCON,” “APCON accreditation,” “advertising curriculum Nigeria,” “advertising regulation Nigeria,” and “role of advertising in national development,” used individually and in combination. Sources were included if they (a) were published in English between 1998 and 2025; (b) addressed advertising education, advertising regulation, or the broader developmental role of advertising, with specific reference to Nigeria; and (c) were available as a journal article, book chapter, conference paper, thesis, or an identifiable institutional document. Sources with no clear relevance to the study objectives, or for which the full text could not be obtained, were excluded.

The initial search returned approximately 102 records. Titles and abstracts were screened against the eligibility criteria, and duplicate records returned by more than one search string were removed. Following this screening, 20 sources were retained for full review, spanning publication dates from 1998 to 2025. The 20 retained sources were read in full and coded thematically against the study's three objectives and the four analytical strands:(i) professional regulation — how statutory bodies such as APCON/ARCON set and enforce standards for who may practise advertising; (ii) human-capital formation — how training, certification and continuing professional development build practitioner competence; (iii) curriculum governance — how accreditation and benchmark academic standards shape what is taught in tertiary advertising programmes; and (iv) market development — how a better-regulated, better-trained advertising sector is presented in the literature as supporting the wider advertising and media economy. These strands are used in the literature review and discussion below to group evidence and to distinguish what individual studies report from what is inferred across studies.

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## Review of Related Literature

### Role of Advertising in National Development

The literature identifies several ways in which advertising is said to contribute to national development. Gupta (2018) reports that in the United States during World War II, advertising campaigns were used to encourage the purchase of war bonds and conservation of resources, which is cited as an example of advertising being mobilised for a collective national purpose. Jones (2020) argues that advertising can shape public perception and social norms through repeated, emotionally resonant messaging — for instance, campaigns addressing gender equality or environmental sustainability. Johnson and Brown (2015) contend that advertising drives economic activity by stimulating consumer demand and enabling informed choice, while Lee and Kim (2019) report that advertising can promote cultural exchange by depicting diverse lifestyles and traditions. Taken together, these sources support the general claim that advertising has a role beyond its immediate commercial function, though this evidence is largely international rather than Nigeria-specific, and the Nigerian applications noted here (privatisation policy, HIV-awareness campaigns) are illustrative rather than the subject of dedicated empirical study in this review.

### Nature of Advertising Education in Nigerian Tertiary Institutions

Advertising education in Nigeria developed as an extension of journalism and mass communication education rather than as a freestanding discipline. No Nigerian university offered formal journalism training until 1962, when the Jackson College of Journalism was established at the University of Nigeria, Nsukka; earlier provision was limited to short vocational courses, such as a two-week programme for working journalists at the University of Ibadan in 1954 (Akinfeleye, 2003). The University of Lagos followed with its Institute of Mass Communication in 1966.

By around 2000, close to 50 Nigerian universities offered courses in journalism or mass communication, structured along either the university model or the polytechnic model, the latter awarding the Ordinary National Diploma (OND) after two years and the Higher National Diploma (HND), broadly equivalent to a bachelor's degree, after a further two years (Aveni, Nyitse & Ogbu, 2019). Aveni, Nyitse and Ogbu (2019) further report that over 58 Nigerian institutions currently offer degree or diploma programmes with a public relations and advertising component, most of them within departments of mass communication rather than as dedicated advertising departments; only Igbinedion University and Lagos State University were identified as offering a stand-alone bachelor's degree in Public Relations and Advertising, with the remainder awarding degrees in mass communication or media studies more broadly.

A comparable pattern holds at the polytechnic level: 24 Nigerian polytechnics were identified as offering advertising-related content within departments of mass communication, leading to the National Diploma and Higher National Diploma, with roughly 40 per cent of the curriculum devoted to theory and 60 per cent to practical work (Aveni, Nyitse & Ogbu, 2019); a compulsory one-year industrial attachment extends the full programme to five years. Rather than list all 24 institutions, it is sufficient to note that their programmes are broadly similar in structure, and that most have had their National Diploma — but not consistently their Higher National Diploma — accredited by the National Board for Technical Education.

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The promulgation of Decree No. 55 of 1988, which established APCON, is described in the literature as a turning point for advertising training and practice, because it required advertising practitioners to be registered and licensed, and gave the regulator explicit functions relating to setting knowledge and skill standards, regulating practice, and conducting examinations and awarding certificates or diplomas (Keghku, 2008). Consistent with this mandate, ARCON (as APCON's successor) runs a professional diploma programme in advertising across six centres — Lagos, Abuja, Kano, Port Harcourt, Enugu and Owerri — alongside regular continuing-education courses. Other providers of advertising-related training include the Nigerian Institute of Journalism and the Time Journalism Institute, though most of their programmes are not accredited by the National Board for Technical Education, and the Nigerian Institute of Public Relations (NIPR), whose Certificate and Diploma Programme includes advertising content even though ARCON's own diploma programme has no independent course in public relations (Nwosu & Nkamnebe, 2006).

**ARCON's Involvement in the Design and Accreditation of Advertising Education Programmes**

Several sources agree that ARCON (and APCON before it) has played a role in promoting advertising education, particularly through certification of members, capacity-building via seminars and workshops, and accreditation of institutions offering advertising courses (Keghku, 2008; Ijeh, 2008; Aveni, Nyitse & Ogbu, 2019). Ayozie (2019) reports that ARCON's accreditation exercise is intended to guide institutions on staffing, equipment and curriculum development, and situates this within Tyler's model of curriculum and instruction, under which accreditation functions as a periodic assessment mechanism tied to defined educational objectives.

One study reportedly investigated how advertising is taught in tertiary institutions in Nigeria's mid-west region against the National Universities Commission's Benchmark Minimum Academic Standards, finding that students were exposed to e-learning and other technological tools, and recommending that ARCON treat accreditation of advertising courses with the same seriousness shown by bodies such as the Nigerian Society of Engineers and the Council of Legal Education (Waya, 2019).

A related study is reported to have examined curricula across Nigerian polytechnics and universities, concluding that regulatory bodies need to intervene more proactively to keep advertising programmes responsive to current professional challenges (Oibe, 2019).

[Comment: this paragraph is attributed to Agbatse (2013) below, but the reference-list entry for Agbatse (2013) is titled “Role of advertising in the development of societies,” which does not obviously match a study on the status and challenges of advertising education. Please verify against the original source and correct either the description or the reference entry.]

Another study on the status and challenges of advertising education in Nigeria reportedly identified a shortage of qualified teaching staff as the leading challenge, and recommended closer collaboration between professional regulators such as APCON/ARCON and communication training institutions (Agbatse, 2013).

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Agba, Oshega and Ogri (2018) similarly recommend that mass communication training institutions, including those offering advertising, invest more in the practical component of their curricula and improve student access to training facilities. Wilson (2018) calls on the National Universities Commission and the National Board for Technical Education to convene a national conference on redesigning communication curricula. On social media specifically, Otugo, Uzuegbunam and Onikezie (2015) report that social media advertising in Nigeria remains at an early developmental stage and that ARCON needs a dedicated framework, including curriculum content, for this area. Ekwueme and Okoro (2018) reach a related conclusion from their study of social media advertising use among online businesses, recommending that social media advertising be formally introduced into the curricula of institutions that train media and advertising practitioners, so that graduates enter the profession with adequate, verifiable competence rather than being self-taught in this area.

**ARCON's Contribution to Advertising Education in Nigerian Tertiary Institutions**

Advertising education in Nigeria is described as having emerged from management and marketing education before being recognised as a distinct professional field. Ayozie (2019) traces this to the University of Nigeria, Nsukka, which established its College of Administration in 1961 and admitted its first Business Administration and Finance students in the 1974/75 session, with marketing later taught as a discrete course from which advertising education subsequently developed. Ogechukwu (2019) reports that the Nigerian Institute of Journalism, established in 1972, was recognised by APCON as a centre for advertising education after introducing a postgraduate diploma in advertising in 1991.

The establishment of APCON by Decree No. 55 of 1988 is presented in the literature as the most significant milestone in the professionalisation of Nigerian advertising, following the National Council of Ministers' adoption, in January 1988, of a Broad National Mass Communication Policy. APCON was inaugurated on 14 November 1989, and from that point determined who could be recognised as an advertising practitioner in Nigeria and what standards of knowledge and skill were required for registration. ARCON, established under the 2022 Act, inherited this registration and standard-setting function. ARCON's diploma in advertising is examined in three stages; the programme, launched in 1993, has continued to run since. From 1 January 2000, unregistered persons practising advertising for gain became liable to prosecution under Decree No. 55 of 1988 as amended by Decree No. 93 of 1992; this remains, in substance, a criminal offence under the current framework. ARCON also runs quarterly and annual lectures, seminars, conferences and Continuing Professional Development (CPD) programmes in Lagos, Abuja and Enugu for practitioners, educators and students. More recently, the University of Nigeria has reportedly explored establishing a professorial chair in advertising with ARCON, and the National Universities Commission's unbundling of mass communication programmes is expected to allow advertising to emerge as a stand-alone course of study in more Nigerian universities.

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**Legal and Regulatory Framework: From APCON to ARCON**

Because the regulatory history underpins much of the discussion above, it is stated here directly. Advertising practice in Nigeria was first placed under statutory regulation by Decree No. 55 of 1988, which established the Advertising Practitioners Council of Nigeria (APCON) and was later consolidated as the Advertising Practitioners (Registration, etc.) Act, Cap. A7, Laws of the Federation of Nigeria 2004. In August 2022, the Advertising Regulatory Council of Nigeria Act 2022 was signed into law, repealing the APCON Act in its entirety and establishing the Advertising Regulatory Council of Nigeria (ARCON) as the apex regulatory authority for advertising, advertisements and marketing communications in Nigeria. The 2022 Act also transferred APCON's statutory functions, rights, obligations and liabilities to ARCON. Accordingly, references in the literature to "APCON, now ARCON" are treated in this review as references to the same regulatory lineage, but the two bodies are legally distinct: APCON existed as a statutory body from 1988 to 2022, and ARCON has existed as its statutory successor since 2022.

**Discussion of Findings**

This section synthesises the reviewed literature against the three study objectives, distinguishing individual sources' claims from the authors' interpretation across sources, and noting where the evidence is thin.

The literature converges on a consistent picture: advertising education in Nigeria is delivered almost entirely inside broader mass communication programmes rather than as a stand-alone discipline, at both university and polytechnic level, with only two universities identified as offering a dedicated advertising degree (Aveni, Nyitse & Ogbu, 2019). The sources also converge on a theory-practice split of roughly 40:60 at polytechnic level. Where the sources diverge is on quality: some studies report reasonably current content, including exposure to e-learning (as reportedly found by Waya, 2019, subject to the source-verification note above), while others report persistent gaps in staffing and facilities (Agba, Oshega & Ogri, 2018). Taken together, this suggests that the structural embedding of advertising within mass communication, rather than curriculum content alone, is the more fundamental issue for this objective, and it is the area where more Nigeria-specific empirical research is needed.

Multiple sources agree that ARCON's accreditation exercise exists and is intended to guide institutions on staffing, equipment and curriculum content (Ayozie, 2019). However, the literature is also consistent in reporting that this function is unevenly applied: accreditation of advertising-specific courses is repeatedly described as incomplete or missing, with recommendations that ARCON adopt the more rigorous accreditation posture seen in professions such as engineering and law. This is a case where individual sources report broadly the same gap independently, which strengthens confidence in the finding even though none of the underlying studies offers a systematic audit of accreditation coverage across all institutions.

The literature is most confident on ARCON's certification and continuing-education functions: sources describe consistent activity in examinations, diploma programmes, seminars, workshops and CPD events across several Nigerian cities. Evidence on downstream outcomes — for example, whether certified practitioners or accredited-programme graduates perform differently in the labour market — is largely absent from the reviewed sources; the claim that certification differentiates professionals from unregistered practitioners is a regulatory design

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intention reported in the literature rather than an outcome that has been independently measured. This is flagged here as a specific evidence gap rather than treated as an established finding.

**Conclusion**

Based on the literature reviewed, ARCON (and APCON before it) has played a documented role in advertising education in Nigeria, principally through practitioner certification, capacity-building via seminars and workshops, and diploma examinations. The evidence for ARCON's accreditation role in tertiary advertising curricula is more limited: the literature consistently identifies this as an area where accreditation is incomplete rather than absent. Claims about advertising's broader contribution to national economic and cultural transformation are supported mainly by international literature and should be read as illustrative context for, rather than direct evidence about, ARCON's specific role in Nigerian advertising education.

**Recommendations**

1. ARCON should formalise its accreditation role for advertising-specific courses in tertiary institutions. Because the National Universities Commission (NUC) holds the statutory mandate to accredit degree programmes in Nigerian universities, while ARCON's mandate under the 2022 Act covers professional standards and registration, the two bodies' roles are complementary rather than overlapping; a joint accreditation protocol — for example, ARCON participation as a subject-specialist assessor on NUC accreditation panels for advertising and mass communication programmes — would allow professional and academic accreditation criteria to be applied together, consistent with the recommendation reported by Waya (2019).
2. ARCON should develop and publish an explicit framework and curriculum guidance for social media advertising, given the literature's consistent finding that this is an under-served area of both regulation and training.
3. Tertiary institutions offering advertising-related courses should incorporate social media advertising into their curricula, in coordination with ARCON's framework once developed, so that graduates enter the profession with formally assessed rather than self-taught competence in this area.

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