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## MARKETING ETHICS AND NATION BUILDING: TOWARDS ACCOUNTABILITY AND TRANSPARENCY IN GOVERNANCE IN NIGERIA

**OLOYEDE** Adeola Olamide

Department of Marketing  
Federal Polytechnic Ado-Ekiti, Ekiti state, Nigeria  
adeolaolamideadediran@gmail.com

**OGAH** Arome Victor

Department of Marketing  
Federal Polytechnic Ado-Ekiti, Ekiti state, Nigeria  
victorogah2008@gmail.com

### ABSTRACT

Marketing ethics is a vital tool that radiates accountability and transparency which in turn enhance nation building towards transforming the life of citizens. This study focused on marketing ethics and nation building, using accountability and transparency in governance as proxies of marketing ethics. Specifically, the study examined the effect of accountability and transparency on nation building. The study adopted survey research design, and collected primary data using structured questionnaire. The population of the study was final year (Higher National Diploma) students from Department of marketing from two Federal Polytechnics across two geographical zones (Ekiti State and Kwara State) in Nigeria. A sample of 186 students was randomly selected for the study. Simple linear Regression Analyses was used to test two hypotheses formulated for the study. The results show that there a significant relationship exists between marketing ethics (accountability and transparency) and nation building. The study therefore recommends that accountability should be displayed in governance, since governance boosts reputation of stakeholders in government. The study also recommends that transparency should be practiced by those in government in order to enhance nation building.

**Keywords:** Accountability, governance, marketing ethics, nation building, transparency

### INTRODUCTION

The issue of accountability and transparency has been a challenge to successive administrations since Nigeria returned to democratic governance in 1999. Nigeria claims to have a dominant economy in Africa due to its privilege of various deposits of natural resources such as petroleum, limestone, bitumen, coal etc.; which could ordinarily, be advantageous to every citizen. However, the reverse is the case. This is poor accountability and transparency of government.

Marketing ethics is an instrument that can be utilized to build a nation that will serve citizens properly. Marketing itself is a discipline towards creating satisfied consumers (societies). It is the concept that encourages accountability and transparency through identification of society's needs and wants. The American Marketing Association (2013, as cited in Cyprian, 2018) define marketing as the activity, set of institutions, and processes for creating, communicating, delivering, and exchanging offerings that add value to customers, clients, partners, and society at large." It symbolizes the importance of delivering value and the responsibility of marketers to create meaningful relationships that promote individual, organization and societal benefits. This multiple stakeholder approach in marketing takes the whole society into consideration (Volle, 2013).

Marketing ethics promote accountability and transparency in the utilization of a nation's resources across various sectors to create benefit for the entire populace. Conceptually, marketing ethics is an inquiry into the nature and grounds of moral judgments, standards, and rules of conduct relating to marketing decisions

and marketing situations. From a normative perspective, marketing ethics emphasize transparent, trustworthy, and responsible personal and organizational marketing policies and actions that exhibit integrity as well as fairness to consumers and other stakeholders” (Ochieng, 2023; Murphy et al., 2005).

From the stakeholder point of view Pride and Ferrell (2012) defined marketing ethics as principles and standards that define acceptable marketing conduct as determined by various stakeholders. In general, marketing ethics is the systematic study of how moral standards apply to marketing decisions, behaviors, and institutions (Abdulnasir, 2015). Marketing ethics can be represented by standards relating to marketing decisions based on what is right and what is wrong in relation to social, political and economic norms. Unethical practices create a negative image for the firm, and lead customers to boycott a firm and its product (Hartin, 2023).

Transparency and accountability are key ways to address both developmental failures and democratic deficits. In the development and aid context, the argument is that, through greater accountability, leaky pipes of corruption and inefficiency will be repaired, aid and public spending will be channeled more effectively and development initiatives will produce greater and more visible results. In recent works, ethics has been considered the study and philosophy of human conduct, with emphasis on the determination of right and wrong conduct.

For marketers, ethics refers to rules (standards, principles) governing the conduct of members in an organization and the marketing decisions consequences (Ochieng, 2023). In lieu of the forgoing, this study sought to examine the effects of marketing ethics (represented by accountability and transparency) on nation building.

### NATURE OF MARKETING ETHICS

Marketing ethics describes basic principles and values that govern companies’ activities involving the promotion of products to customers. Marketing ethics guide the conduct of organizational members and marketing decisions effectiveness (Abdulnasir, 2015). Ethics in Marketing "is a moral judgment and behavior standards in practice of marketing revolving marketing area" (Lee & Jin, 2019), and focuses on principles and standards that define acceptable marketing conduct but presently, marketing ethics goes beyond legal, regulatory and marketing issues which help build long-term relationship marketing (Dincer & Dincer, 2014).

Ethical marketing practices are aimed at promoting the values of firms, with a view to attracting consumers (Vederhus & Nath, 2022). Such values include not selling harmful or dangerous products; not deceiving customer or misleading customers by giving them wrong information about the product; not exploiting customer through unfair prices; and not damaging the environment. Others include providing accessible channels for customer complaints, not overstating the product quality and benefits and not disparage competitors (Gaski as cited in Indeed Editorial Team 2022).

Marketing ethics embrace transparency by creating a spirit of openness in communication, constructive criticism, action and disclosure. Dole (2019) identify six ethical prescription that marketers are expected to abide by. These are *honesty* – to be forthright in dealings with clients, offer something of value and integrity; *responsibility* – accepting the consequences of marketing decisions and action, serve the needs of customers and being good stewards of the environment; *fairness* – balancing buyer needs and seller interest fairly, and avoid manipulation in all forms while protecting the information of the consumers; *respect* – acknowledging basic human dignity of all people involved through efforts to communicate, understand and meet needs and appreciate contributions of others; *transparency* – creating a spirit of openness in the practice of marketing through communication, constructive criticism, action, and disclosure; and *citizenship*

– fulfilling all legal, economic, and social responsibilities to all stakeholders and protecting the environment.

### **ACCOUNTABILITY, TRANSPARENCY AND MARKETING ETHICS**

Accountability and transparency are not easily separated: they both encompass many of the same actions, for instance, public reporting. Transparency and accountability are interrelated and mutually reinforcing concepts. Without transparency it will be difficult to access timely and reliable information on decisions and performance, and call public sector entities to account.

Accountability is the mechanism to report on the usage of public resources and consequences for failing to meet stated performance objectives and without it transparency would be of little value. The existence of both conditions is a prerequisite to effective, efficient and equitable management in public institutions. And as such, both conditions are necessary in trying to achieve sustainable human development through better governance in an era of globalization (Prokopowicz, 2023).

Transparency allows citizens to have access to information about commitments that the state has made and whether it has met them. The politics of transparency and accountability has its central concerns to the nascent democratic culture of Nigeria. By its very nature, transparency and accountability determine to a very large extent, the level of development or under-development of a given society (Jashari & Pepaj, 2018). To grasp the dialectics of transparency within the context of struggle of the Nigerian people for better standard of living, it is apposite to situate our analysis in the budgeting process in establishing the linkage between transparency, accountability and political instability (Gado, 2023).

The rising emphasis on the citizen side of the equation therefore naturally prompt greater attention to accountability and participation. The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) was a leader in this area in the early 2000s, pushing for the concept of democratic governance by which it meant to focus on elements of accountability, transparency, participation, and inclusion as a fruitful formulation of a broadened governance agenda (United Nations Development Programme, 2006; Thomas, & Saskia, 2014).

The 2004 World Development Report, *Making Services Work for Poor People*, specifically highlighted the importance of accountability in addressing the catastrophic failure of service delivery to the world's poorest people, and pointed to citizen engagement and direct interaction with service providers as a crucial part of the solution. It recommend, that donors should not only focus on channeling resources and technical assistance to underperforming public education systems, but also support citizens in addressing local challenges such as teacher absenteeism and bribery by monitoring performance and directly engaging with responsible providers and officials (World Bank, 2007; Thomas & Saskia, 2014).

### **CONCEPTUAL MODEL OF MARKETING ETHICS AND NATION BUILDING**

Conceptual model of marketing ethics and nation building showcases the significance of marketing ethics to nation building. The priority of marketing ethics is to exhibit fairness and satisfy consumers' (citizens) desires. This concept lay emphasis on welfare of consumers (citizens) by identifying their needs. The model further indicates that marketing ethics can effectively influence nation building through actualization of accountability and transparency.

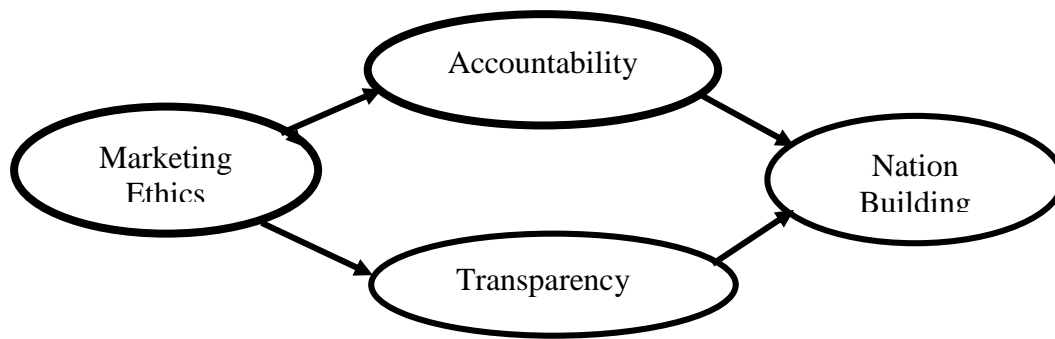


Fig. 1: Conceptual model of marketing ethics and Nation Building

### METHODOLOGY

The study adopted survey research design. Data used in this study was collected through primary source. The population of the study was 186 final year (Higher National Diploma) students from Department of marketing from two Federal Polytechnics across two geographical zones (Ekiti state and Kwara state) in Nigeria. The study utilized simple random sampling technique to select 92 students. 4-point likert scale instrument (questionnaire) was used to obtain data. Likert scale was adopted because it measures the intensity or degree of agreement by the respondent to a statement that describes a situation, phenomenon, item or a treatment (Asika, 2002). Content validity was used to determine the validity of the instrument by giving to research experts who modified and made the necessary correction to measure the instrument. The value of the test of reliability was 0.80 which was conducted using test-retest reliability method which indicated that there is internal consistency of the instrument. Simple linear Regression Analyses was used to test the hypotheses with the aid of Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 23.

### ANALYSES AND RESULT

186 questionnaire were administered and 92 were retrieved and used for the study. The descriptive analyses show the distribution of respondents on the bases of sex, age and qualification. The analyses of distribution of sex shows that 48 were male representing 52.2% and 44 were female representing 47.8%. The analyses of distribution of age of respondents shows that, out of 92, respondents, 34 falls between 20 – 29 years, 51 falls between 30- 39 and 7 falls within 40 years and above. Analyses of distribution of educational qualifications of respondents show that 92 obtain ND.

**TEST OF HYPOTHESE**

**Ho<sub>1</sub>:** Accountability as an instrument of marketing ethics has significant effect on Nation building.

**Table 1: Regression Model Summary for Ho<sub>1</sub>**

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
<b>Ho<sub>1</sub></b>	.610 <sup>a</sup>	.372	.365	.59403

a. Predictors: (Constant), Accountability (Marketing ethics )

b. Dependent Variable: Nation building

**Table 2 : ANOVA for Ho<sub>1</sub>**

Model	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
<b>Ho<sub>1</sub></b> Regression	18.795	1	18.795	53.263	.000 <sup>b</sup>
Residual	31.759	90	.353		
Total	50.554	91			

a. Dependent Variable: Nation building

b. Predictors: (Constant): Accountability (Marketing ethics )

Source: SPSS Version 23

According to Table 2, the overall result for the regression model was ( $p = 0.000 < 0.05$ ). This results indicate accountability has significant effect on nation building. We therefore reject null hypothesis which state that accountability as an instrument of marketing ethics has no significant effect on Nation building. The result suggests that accountability can be used to drive nation building. It means that increased accountability will lead to improved nation building. The  $R^2$  value of 0.372 produced by the test shows that accountability explain 4.6% variation in nation building. The analysis of variance (ANOVA) calculated F test was 53.263 and an associated significance p value of 0.000 ( $p \text{ value} < 0.05$ ) was significant. The implication was that the simple linear regression was good fit for the data.

**Ho<sub>2</sub>:** Transparency as an instrument of marketing ethics has significant effect on Nation building.

**Table 3: Regression Model Summary for Ho<sub>2</sub>**

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
<b>Ho<sup>2</sup></b>	.909 <sup>a</sup>	.826	.824	.33867

a. Predictors: (Constant) :Transparency (Marketing ethics)

b. Dependent Variable: Nation building

Source: SPSS Version 23

**Table 4 : ANOVA for Ho<sub>2</sub>**

Model	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
<b>Ho<sup>2</sup></b> Regression	<b>48.840</b>	1	48.840	425.810	.000 <sup>b</sup>
Residual	10.323	90	.115		
Total	59.163	91			

a. Dependent Variable: Nation building

b. Predictors: (Constant), Transparency (Marketing ethics)

**Source:** SPSS Version 23

According to Table 3, the overall result for the regression model was significant ( $p = 0.000 < 0.05$ ). The results indicate that transparency has strong positive effect on nation building. The result suggests that transparency is a prerequisite to Nation building; and that if transparency is increasing, nation building will also improve.  $R^2$  of 0.826 means that transparency explain 8.2% variation in nation building. Thus, we reject null hypothesis which state that transparency as an instrument of marketing ethics has no significant effect on nation building. The analysis of variance (ANOVA) calculated F test was 425.810 and the associated significance p value is 0.000 ( $p \text{ value} < 0.05$ ). The implication was that the simple linear regression was good fit for the data.

### **DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS**

The results obtained from the test of hypotheses shows marketing ethics has significant effect on Nation building. This results aligns with the view of Dincer and Dincer (2014) that personal values and moral philosophies are key to ethical decisions in marketing; and that honesty, fairness, responsibility and citizenship are values that guide complex marketing decisions, which benefit individuals firms and society at large. Ethics are morals that everyone has in their decision making process for creating the final outcome. They are obligations, responsibility and social justice of all individuals related to taking a decision (Chowdhury, 2016).

Our findings also support Ferrell (2004) that marketing exchanges the relationship between a customer and an organization exists because of mutual expectations built on trust, good faith, and fair dealing in their interaction. Ethical marketing from a normative perspective emphasize transparent, trustworthy, and responsible personal and organizational marketing policies and actions that exhibit integrity as well as fairness to consumers and other stakeholders (Madhani, 2016).

### **CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

The findings this study shows that accountability and transparency as instruments of marketing ethics have significant effect on nation building. Marketing ethics deals with the systematic study of how moral standards are applied to marketing decisions, behaviors and institutions. Marketing ethics will help the society as a whole both in short term and long term. Marketing ethics had an influence on companies and their response to market their product. In a more socially responsible way, ethical standards should not be confused with the government regulations brought into force to improve consumers (citizens) welfare.

Based on the findings and discussions above, the study recommends that:

- a) Accountability must be display, in order to promote good governance in Nigeria. Good governance boosts reputation of stakeholders in government.
- b) Transparency as an instrument of marketing ethics should be practice in order to enhance Nation building.
- c) Marketing ethics should be enforced to create utility by identifying the needs and want of citizens to enhance their standard of living.
- d) Stakeholder should inculcate marketing ethics in governance in order to manage the nation resources effectively.
- e) Marketing as a discipline should be introduced into mode of governing Nigeria as a nation through fairness and honesty in order to meet the need of the society.

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