

# Perceptions of Corporate Image of Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) During 2023 Elections: A Study of Facebook and WhatsApp Users in South-East Nigeria

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<p><b>Corresponding Author</b>  <b>Nwokeocha Ifeanyi Martins</b></p> <p>Department of Journalism and Media Studies, Federal University Otuoke, Bayelsa State.</p> <p><b>Article History</b></p> <p>Received: 04 / 10 / 2024</p> <p>Accepted: 16 / 10 / 2024</p> <p>Published: 19 / 10 / 2024</p>	<p><b>Abstract:</b> This study investigates the perceptions of Facebook and WhatsApp users in South East Nigeria towards the corporate image of the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) during the 2023 general elections. The objectives of the study were to: assess the perceptions of Facebook and WhatsApp users in South East Nigeria towards the corporate image of INEC during the 2023 general elections; explore the factors that contributed to the formation of such perceptions of INEC's corporate image among Facebook and WhatsApp users in South East Nigeria; and examine how perceptions of INEC's corporate image among Facebook and WhatsApp users in South East Nigeria influence public trust and confidence in the electoral process during the 2023 general elections. The study employed a survey research design, and the data were collected through electronic questionnaires distributed to 384 participants. The study found that 61% of respondents had a negative perception of INEC's corporate image during the 2023 general elections, while only 11% had a positive perception. The study also revealed that past experiences with INEC played a significant role in shaping individuals' perceptions. Moreover, negative perceptions of INEC's corporate image strongly influenced public trust and confidence in the electoral process, which could lead to lower voter turnout and affect the overall legitimacy of the elections. The study concludes that there is an urgent need for INEC to improve its corporate image to restore public trust and confidence in the electoral process in Nigeria.</p> <p><b>Keywords:</b> Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC), corporate image, perceptions, public trust, electoral process.</p>
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## Introduction

The Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) is the electoral body in Nigeria responsible for organizing and supervising general elections, by-elections, and referendums in the country. It was established in 1998 as a result of the constitutional reforms that took place under the regime of General Abdulsalami Abubakar. Since then, INEC has been conducting elections at the federal, state, and local government levels. In the words of Onu (2010, p. 32):

*INEC is a permanent body created by Section 153(1) (f) of the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, 1999 (as amended). Its primary function is to organize and conduct free, fair, and credible elections in Nigeria. INEC's mandate covers all aspects of the electoral process, including voter registration, political party registration, boundary delineation, election*

*logistics, training of electoral officials, the conduct of elections, counting of votes, and announcing of results.*

Since its establishment in 1998, INEC has been conducting general elections at the federal, state, and local government levels. INEC's first major elections were the 1999 elections, which marked Nigeria's return to democratic rule after several years of military dictatorship. Over the years, INEC has conducted several other elections, including the 2003, 2007, 2011, 2015, and 2019 general elections. While these elections were generally deemed successful, some were marred by irregularities and violence. In response to these challenges, INEC has implemented several electoral reforms aimed at improving the credibility and integrity of the electoral process. One of INEC's most significant electoral reforms is the use of technology in the conduct of elections. INEC has introduced

several technological innovations, including the use of smart card readers for voter accreditation, the use of electronic transmission of results, and the introduction of the INEC Result Viewing (IREV) platform to enhance transparency in the electoral process (Ahmed, 2020). However, these innovations have not been without challenges. The smart card readers have malfunctioned during some elections, and the electronic transmission of results has been a subject of controversy. Despite these challenges, INEC remains committed to leveraging technology to improve the conduct of elections in Nigeria, with the 2023 elections as a particular reference.

The 2023 general elections in Nigeria were scheduled to hold on 23rd February 2023, and they were crucial moments in the country's political history. These elections marked the tenth quadrennial elections since Nigeria's return to democratic rule in 1999. Nigerians had the opportunity to elect a new president, vice president, and members of the National Assembly. State-level elections also took place across the federation (Obboh, 2021). The 2023 elections was, however, significant for several reasons. First, the elections provided an opportunity to assess the progress made in Nigeria's democratic journey since 1999. Second, the elections was an opportunity to test the efficacy of the electoral reforms implemented by INEC in recent years. Third, the elections was watched closely by the international community, which had a significant interest in the stability and progress of Nigeria. Okposorie (2024, p. 4) avers that:

The 2023 elections were characterized by intense political campaigns, massive voter turnout, and heightened security concerns. The elections held in an atmosphere of political tension amid threats of violence from various groups across the country. The successful conduct of these elections was paramount to Nigeria's democratic growth and stability, and it would have set the tone for the country's political future. But the elections were marred by certain cataclysmic irregularities that, in no small measures, daunted the image of Nigeria's electoral umpire, the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC). Therefore, the corporate image of INEC played a crucial role in fostering trust or distrust among the populace, as Nigerians looked to INEC to conduct impartial and transparent polls.

Aremu (2015, p. 9) observes that "corporate image is the perception that the public has of an organization. It is a combination of visual and non-visual elements, and it plays a critical role in shaping how an organization is perceived by its stakeholders". INEC's corporate image is essential because it influences how the public perceives the organization's ability to

deliver free, fair, and credible elections. It influences the trustworthiness and credibility of the electoral process in Nigeria. The corporate image comprises the visual and non-visual indicators that the public associates with the organization. The visual elements include the organization's logo, brand colours, website design, and communication materials, while the non-visual elements include INEC's reputation, track record, and perceived level of transparency in the conduct of elections (Ayo, 2021). The perception that the public has of INEC's corporate image significantly impacts the level of public trust and confidence in the agency's ability to conduct free, fair, and credible elections in Nigeria (Idris, 2019).

According to Samuel and Obiora (2018, p. 53), "a positive corporate image is essential for INEC to gain the trust of stakeholders in the electoral process, including political parties, civil society organizations, international election observers, and the general public". INEC needs to communicate a clear message about its commitment to conducting impartial, transparent, and credible elections. To achieve this, INEC has to ensure that its corporate image is effective in portraying the organization's values and intentions. Improving INEC's corporate image involves effectively communicating INEC's plans to carry out its mandate transparently and effectively, reassuring stakeholders about the integrity of the electoral process, and building confidence in the institution (Mmewurum, 2023).

Albeit, the corporate image of INEC has been the subject of intense debate in recent years. Some Nigerians believe that the organization has done an excellent job in conducting elections, while others believe that it has not lived up to expectations. It becomes crucial, therefore, to understand how INEC's corporate image influenced the perception of the public during the 2023 elections.

## Statement of the Problem

The conduct of free, fair, and credible elections is critical to the survival and growth of any democratic society. In Nigeria, the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) is tasked with organizing and conducting credible elections. However, over the years, the credibility of some of INEC's elections has been called into question, with issues of electoral fraud, malpractices, and irregularities being witnessed during some elections. This has raised concerns about the effectiveness of INEC's corporate image in influencing perceptions of the electoral process. Against this backdrop, the 2023 general elections in Nigeria presented a critical moment for INEC to showcase their commitment to delivering

transparent and credible polls. But what the perceptions of the electorates were of INEC during the 2023 elections calls for concern.

Evidently, social media platforms have become increasingly important in shaping public opinion with regards to politics and electoral processes in Nigeria. The emergence of social media has significantly influenced the way Nigerians consume, share, and interact with political information. Social media platforms such as Facebook and WhatsApp have become essential tools for political communication, with politicians, political parties, and interest groups using them to mobilize support and disseminate their messages to the public. This trend has had a significant impact on the country's electoral process, with social media platforms providing a platform for citizens to voice their opinions, raise concerns, and hold political leaders accountable. As a consequence, social media has become a vital tool for shaping public opinion on politics and electoral processes in Nigeria. In light of this, understanding how social media users perceive the corporate image of INEC during the 2023 elections becomes imperative for ensuring the credibility of the electoral process and building public trust and confidence in the institution.

The researcher, thus, sought to ask: What are the perceptions of the corporate image of INEC during the 2023 general elections among Facebook and WhatsApp users in South East Nigeria, and how do these perceptions impact public trust and confidence in the electoral process? Herein lie the thrust of this study.

## Objectives of the Study

The objectives of the study were:

- i. To assess the perceptions of Facebook and WhatsApp users in South East Nigeria towards the corporate image of INEC during the 2023 general elections.
- ii. To explore the factors that contributed to the formation of such perceptions of INEC's corporate image among Facebook and WhatsApp users in South East Nigeria.
- iii. To examine how perceptions of INEC's corporate image among Facebook and WhatsApp users in South East Nigeria influence public trust and confidence in the electoral process during the 2023 general elections.

## Research Questions

The research questions for this study were:

- i. What is the perception of Facebook and WhatsApp users in South East Nigeria towards the corporate image of INEC during the 2023 general elections?

ii. What factors contributed to the formation of such perceptions of INEC's corporate image among Facebook and WhatsApp users in South East Nigeria?

iii. In what ways do perceptions of INEC's corporate image among Facebook and WhatsApp users in South East Nigeria influence public trust and confidence in the electoral process during the 2023 general elections?

## Literature Review

### Understanding Corporate Image

Corporate image is a vital element of an organization's reputation, and it plays a crucial role in shaping consumer behavior and public perception (Kotler, Adam, Brown, and Armstrong, 2007). According to Balmer (2001), corporate image refers to "the impression that organizational audiences have of that organization." This impression is formed by a combination of tangible and intangible factors, including the quality of products or services, company culture, brand identity, and external communication (Balmer, 2001). A corporate image is the general perception or reputation that a company or organization has in the minds of its stakeholders, such as customers, employees, investors, suppliers, and the general public. This general perception is derived from the tangible and intangible factors that make up the organization's identity and culture. Tangible factors include the quality of services or products, pricing, packaging, and physical facilities, such as stores, offices, and warehouses.

Meanwhile, intangible factors related to the corporate image encompass the brand identity, corporate values, mission, and vision, tone of communication, leadership, and employee behavior. Moreover, it also includes the external communication strategies and tactics an organization uses to convey its message to stakeholders, such as advertising, public relations, social media, and other digital channels. Companies that have a positive and strong corporate image have greater customer loyalty, brand reputation, and public trust, while those with a negative or weak corporate image have difficulty sustaining business success and face reputational damage. Research has shown that a positive corporate image leads to increased sales and revenue, enhances stakeholder trust and loyalty, and provides a competitive advantage in the market (Jahanshani et al., 2014). Therefore, managing corporate image is essential for organizations as it affects their reputation and financial performance. By aligning tangible and intangible aspects of corporate identity and culture, organizations can build a compelling brand image that resonates with the intended audience and inspires loyalty and trust. A well-managed corporate image strategy must be designed to assess and monitor stakeholders' needs and sentiments, communicate effectively to maintain positive stakeholder perceptions, and build long-term brand value.

In simpler terms, corporate image refers to how organizations are perceived by external audiences, including customers, competitors, and the general public (Hassan and Craft, 2012). It is important to note that corporate image is not limited to the tangible aspects of a company, such as its products or services, but also includes intangible aspects such as its values, beliefs, and communication strategies (Balmer, 2001).

Understanding the corporate image is crucial for organizations as it shapes the way external audiences perceive the organization and influences their decision-making [Kotler et al., 2007]. For instance, a positive corporate image can lead to increased customer loyalty, enhanced reputation, and perceived credibility in the market, while a negative image can lead to a loss of trust, decrease in sales, and a tarnished reputation (Jahanshani, Salehi, Moghbel, and Jahanshani, 2014).

## INEC: A Review

The Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) was established on June 1, 1998, by the Nigerian government under the Abubakar Abdulsalami administration. The agency's establishment was part of the transitional process towards the Fourth Republic, which aimed to restore democratic governance in Nigeria after years of military rule. INEC was created by the 1999 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, which gave it the mandate to organize, conduct, and supervise all federal and state elections in the country. The Commission comprises a chairman and twelve commissioners appointed by the Nigerian President, subject to confirmation by the Senate. The Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) is the electoral regulatory body in Nigeria, established in 1998 to monitor and conduct democratic and credible elections in the country (Ojo & Oladeinde, 2016).

The first chairman of INEC was Chief Ephraim Akpata, who served from 1998 to 2000. He was succeeded by Abel Guobadia, who served from 2000 to 2005, during which the agency conducted the 2003 general elections. Guobadia introduced the use of the smart card readers and voter registration to improve the credibility and transparency of the electoral process. After Guobadia, Professor Maurice Iwu became the chairman of INEC from 2005 to 2010. During his tenure, Nigeria experienced significant challenges in conducting credible elections, leading to calls for reforms and improvement in INEC's operations. Iwu was succeeded by Professor Attahiru Jega in 2010, who brought many reforms to the electoral process and successfully conducted the 2011 general elections with the introduction of electronic voting.

Since 2015, Professor Mahmood Yakubu has been the chairman of INEC, overseeing the conduct of the 2015, 2019 and 2023 general elections. Under his leadership, the agency has faced several challenges, including logistical issues, electoral violence, voter apathy, and delayed elections, but has continued to make progress in the improvement of the electoral process (Ezekwesili, 2019).

The agency is responsible for voter registration, candidate nominations, polling, vote counting, and declaration of election results. Over the years, INEC has evolved to become an independent, transparent, and accountable institution, despite several challenges and criticisms from stakeholders (Maiyaki, 2020). One of the significant milestones of INEC was the introduction of electronic voting in the 2011 general elections, which improved the speed and efficiency of the electoral process (Ogunleye & Afolayan, 2015). However, the system faced several technical glitches, leading to voter disenfranchisement and controversies in some states (Igbinedion, 2011). Despite these problems, INEC improved the electronic voting system by

introducing the use of card readers in the 2015 elections, which enhanced the credibility of the polls (Iserhienrhien, 2016).

Another significant achievement of INEC was the conduct of the 2019 general elections, which recorded the highest number of registered voters and female candidates in the history of Nigeria (Zuru, 2020). The commission also addressed several challenges, such as logistics, security, and political interference, to ensure free, fair, and credible elections (Igbinedion, 2019). Despite these successes, INEC still faces several challenges, such as weak legal frameworks, inadequate funding, voter apathy, and electoral violence (Iserhienrhien, 2016). The agency needs to address these issues to improve its effectiveness, credibility, and legitimacy in democratic governance (Ojo & Oladeinde, 2016).

## Public Perception of INEC

The problem of conducting and managing elections constitute a central factor in the process of democratic rule in Nigeria and many sub-Saharan African states (Momoh & Adejumbi, 190). Although the integrity of elections is fundamentally germane to the sustenance of a truly representative form of government. Elections conducted in Nigeria have been persistently incredible and unsatisfactory as the umpires have consistently performed below expectation (Momoh & Godwin, 2005). The Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) is a vital institution responsible for conducting free and fair elections in Nigeria (Afrobarometer, 2019). However, the public's perception of the agency has been mixed, with some expressing satisfaction with its operations, while others remain skeptical and distrustful of the institution. Ogunleye & Afolayan (2020, p. 71) note that:

The perception of INEC by the Nigerian public is a mixture of positive and negative views. Some individuals have confidence in the agency, while others are skeptical of its operations and independence. One report illustrates that less than half of Nigerians have trust in INEC to conduct free and fair elections. A contributing factor to the low trust level is a perceived lack of transparency in INEC's operations and the possibility of political interference. Additionally, consistency in decision-making, especially during the cancellation of elections and declaration of results, has been a widely criticized area. Nonetheless, some analysts believe that INEC has made significant progress and improved the credibility of elections in Nigeria, such as deploying technology to enhance the accuracy of the 2019 presidential elections. To enhance INEC's effectiveness and legitimacy, addressing concerns about transparency, consistency, and independence is crucial to restore public trust and confidence in the electoral process.

According to a report by Afrobarometer, a leading African research network, only 44% of Nigerians express confidence in INEC to conduct free and fair elections. The report highlights that many Nigerians believe the agency is vulnerable to political interference, lacks independence, and is not transparent in its operations (Afrobarometer, 2019). Furthermore, some stakeholders have criticized INEC for being inconsistent in its decision-making, especially in the cancellation of elections and declaration of election results. For example, in the 2019 general elections, the agency's decision to cancel the gubernatorial election in Bauchi State one day after declaring the results led to widespread criticism

and distrust among the electorate (Ogunleye & Afolayan, 2020). However, some analysts have argued that INEC has made significant progress in recent years and has improved the credibility of the electoral process. For example, in the 2019 general elections, the agency successfully deployed technology, such as card readers and electronic transmission of results, to enhance the transparency and accuracy of the polls (Ezekwesili, 2019).

Meanwhile, the public's perception of INEC's conduct of elections in Nigeria is an important aspect of electoral integrity and credibility. In recent years, there has been a mixed perception of INEC's operation and independence. Restoring public trust and confidence in INEC's conduct of elections in Nigeria would require addressing concerns about transparency, consistency, and independence. This would help enhance the credibility and legitimacy of the electoral process in Nigeria and ensure that the public has confidence in the democratic process.

## Theoretical Frameworks

The following theories were relevant in this study:

### Elaboration Likelihood Model

The Elaboration Likelihood Model (ELM) was initially proposed by Petty and Cacioppo in 1986 and suggests that persuasion occurs through two routes: the central route and the peripheral route (Petty & Cacioppo, 1986). The central route is where individuals carefully consider the message content and quality before forming an attitude, while the peripheral route is where an individual's attitude is shaped by peripheral cues, such as the message source and their attractiveness. Regarding this study, the ELM can be used to understand how Facebook and WhatsApp users in South East Nigeria process information concerning INEC's corporate image during the 2023 elections. The central route can indicate whether a Facebook and WhatsApp user is persuaded to have a positive or negative perception of INEC's corporate image based on carefully evaluating the content of the message. Meanwhile, the peripheral route can indicate whether an individual is influenced by peripheral cues with respect to INEC's corporate image, such as receiving news or rumors heard from someone else.

## Data Analysis

### RQ 1: What is the perception of Facebook and WhatsApp users in South East Nigeria towards the corporate image of INEC during the 2023 general elections?

Options	Frequency	Percentages (%)
Positive	41	11
Negative	236	61
Neutral	83	22
Unsure	24	6
Total	384	100

The data revealed that a majority of Facebook and WhatsApp users in South East Nigeria have a negative perception (61%) of INEC's corporate image during the 2023 general elections. Only 11% of respondents reported a positive perception of INEC's corporate image, while 22% had a neutral perception and 6% were unsure.

## Social Identity Theory

Social Identity Theory (SIT) was first proposed by Tajfel and Turner (1979), who stated that an individual's self-concept derives from both their personal and social identity. When individuals feel that they are part of a social group, they start to identify with the group's interests, beliefs, and values, which govern their behavior and attitudes. The theory emphasizes that it is not only an individual's individual identity that shapes their attitudes and behaviors, but also their group identity. Relating to this study, SIT can be used to understand how Facebook and WhatsApp users in South East Nigeria form perceptions of INEC's corporate identity during the 2023 elections. Social media platforms are virtual communities that bring together people from different social groups, and membership in these groups can impact how individuals view INEC's corporate image. In other words, SIT can be used to analyze how Facebook and WhatsApp users' membership in social groups defined by geography, religion, and ethnicity affect their perceptions of INEC's corporate image.

## Methodology

This study employed a survey research design to investigate the perceptions of Facebook and WhatsApp users in South East Nigeria towards the corporate image of INEC during the 2023 elections. The population of Facebook and WhatsApp users in South East Nigeria is unknown. Therefore, the sample size of the study was determined using the appropriate statistical formula suggested by Topman (1975) for an unknown population. The sample size was calculated to be 385 respondents. The convenience sampling technique was used to select the participants for this study. Facebook and WhatsApp were used as the primary platforms to reach the target population. The questionnaire was distributed electronically to the selected respondents, and they were given a week to fill and submit the survey. The questionnaire consists of both closed-ended and open-ended questions to gather both qualitative and quantitative data. The data collected was analyzed using descriptive statistics, including frequencies and percentages. Data collected from closed-ended responses were analyzed thematically. The results of the study were presented using tables.

This suggests that there is little faith in INEC's ability to conduct free and fair elections in South East Nigeria.

The high percentage of negative perceptions could be due to several factors, such as past experiences with INEC, political affiliations, and media reports about INEC. As noted by Schudson and Anderson (2009), the media has a significant influence on shaping individuals' perceptions of institutions like INEC. Thus,

negative media reports about INEC might have contributed to unfavorable perceptions among participants in the study. The negative perceptions about INEC's corporate image have significant implications for public trust and confidence in the electoral process in South East Nigeria. As noted by Norris (2017),

public trust in an electoral process is essential for the legitimacy of democratic institutions. Thus, if the negative perceptions of INEC persist, it could further erode public trust and confidence in the electoral process, leading to social and political instability.

## RQ 2: What factors contributed to the formation of such perceptions of INEC's corporate image among Facebook and WhatsApp users in South East Nigeria?

Options	Frequency	Percentages (%)
Past experiences with INEC	312	81
Political affiliations	15	4
Media reports about INEC	32	8
Cultural background	19	5
Socioeconomic status	6	2
Total	384	100

The data above displays the factors that contributed to the formation of perceptions of the Independent National Electoral Commission's (INEC) corporate image among Facebook and WhatsApp users in South East Nigeria. The results show that the majority of respondents, 81% (312 out of 384), stated that their past experiences with INEC played a significant role in shaping their perceptions.

This finding is not surprising as past experiences often shape individuals' perceptions of institutions. For instance, if an individual had a positive experience with INEC in the past, they are likely to have a positive perception of the commission's corporate image. On the other hand, individuals who had negative experiences are likely to have a negative perception. Previous studies have noted that past experiences are influential in shaping attitudes and behaviour (Ajzen & Fishbein, 1980; Eagly & Chaiken, 1993).

A smaller percentage of respondents (8%) stated that media reports about INEC contributed to their perceptions. This finding suggests

that the media played a minor role in shaping individuals' perceptions of INEC's corporate image in South East Nigeria. However, it is worth noting that media reports can have a significant impact on shaping public perceptions, as the media plays a vital role in disseminating information to the public.

A small percentage of respondents (4%) cited political affiliations as a factor that contributed to their perceptions. This finding suggests that political affiliations played a minor role in shaping individuals' perceptions of INEC's corporate image. However, it is worth noting that political affiliations can have a significant influence on shaping perceptions, especially in a politically charged environment.

The data also show that respondents' cultural background (5%) and socioeconomic status (2%) played a minor role in shaping their perceptions of INEC's corporate image. Culture can shape attitudes and behaviours (Triandis, 1994), while socioeconomic status can influence access to information and resources (Keister, 2000).

## RQ 3: In what ways did perceptions of INEC's corporate image among Facebook and WhatsApp users in South East Nigeria influenced public trust and confidence in the electoral process during the 2023 general elections?

Options	Frequency	Percentages (%)
Increase trust and confidence	31	8
Decrease trust and confidence	302	79
No effect on trust and confidence	12	3
Passive acceptance or neutrality	39	10
Total	384	100

The data above shows the ways in which perceptions of INEC's corporate image among Facebook and WhatsApp users in South East Nigeria influenced public trust and confidence in the electoral process during the 2023 general elections. The results indicate that the majority of respondents, 79% (302 out of 384), felt that their perceptions led to a decrease in public trust and confidence in the electoral process.

This finding is not surprising, as negative perceptions of an institution can lead to a decrease in trust and confidence. Previous studies have noted that public trust and confidence are essential components of the electoral process, as they affect voter turnout

and overall legitimacy of the elections (Norris, 1999; Trechsel & Mendez, 2005).

A smaller percentage of respondents (8%) felt that their perceptions led to an increase in public trust and confidence in the electoral process. This finding suggests that a positive perception of an institution can also have a positive impact on public trust and confidence. It is worth noting that positive perceptions are often linked to positive experiences with an institution. Institutions can work to improve public trust and confidence by providing positive experiences to the public.

A small percentage of respondents (3%) felt that their perceptions had no effect on public trust and confidence in the electoral

process. This finding suggests that some individuals may not be influenced by their perceptions of an institution and may base their trust and confidence in other factors.

Lastly, a small percentage of respondents (10%) reported passive acceptance or neutrality towards their perceptions of INEC's corporate image. This finding highlights the need for institutions to engage with the public and address any negative perceptions that may exist. Institutions can work to increase public trust and confidence by engaging with the public and addressing their concerns.

## Conclusion

The findings of this study suggest that Facebook and WhatsApp users in South East Nigeria have overall negative perceptions of INEC's corporate image during the 2023 general elections. The negative perceptions were influenced by past experiences with INEC, media reports about INEC, political affiliations, cultural background, and socioeconomic status. The negative perceptions strongly influenced public trust and confidence in the electoral process during the 2023 general elections, which could lead to lower voter turnout and affect the overall legitimacy of the elections. Therefore, there is an urgent need for INEC to improve its corporate image and restore public trust and confidence in the electoral process in Nigeria.

## Recommendations

- i. INEC should prioritize improving its services to ensure better past experiences that will shape the public's perceptions of the organization positively.
- ii. INEC should find ways to work more closely with the media to improve its coverage and correct any inaccuracies that might harm its reputation.
- iii. INEC should engage more meaningfully with all stakeholders, including political parties, civil society organizations, and other stakeholders to address any concerns they might have, and improve transparency.
- iv. INEC should develop and implement strategies to promote a positive corporate image that accurately reflects its values and intentions.
- v. INEC should ensure that its technological innovations are correctly deployed and functional, including the smart card readers, electronic transmission of results, and IReV platforms.
- vi. INEC should analyze the results of the study to gain insights into the main drivers of negative perceptions. This will help the organization to design better communication strategies that address the concerns of the public.
- vii. INEC should carry out periodic surveys to gauge public perceptions about its corporate image. This will help the organization to improve its services, enhance stakeholder engagement, and monitor its overall performance.

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