INFLUENCE OF DECEPTIVE ADVERTISING ON CONSUMER BEHAVIOUR

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ABSTRACT

Deceptive advertising has become a growing concern in marketing, as it significantly impacts consumer behavior by fostering skepticism, reducing trust, and influencing purchase decisions. This study examines the negative effects of deceptive advertising on consumer behavior by analyzing three key components: deceitful advertising, fallacious arguments, and emotional persuasion. Utilizing a quantitative research approach, data was collected from consumers in Coimbatore through a structured survey, and Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) was employed to analyze the relationships between variables. The results confirm that all three forms of deceptive advertising negatively affect consumer behavior, with deceitful advertising ($\beta = -0.372$, $p < 0.001$), fallacious arguments ($\beta = -0.269$, $p < 0.001$), and emotional persuasion ($\beta = -0.351$, $p < 0.001$) significantly reducing trust, purchase intention, and brand loyalty. These findings underscore the importance of ethical advertising practices and regulatory interventions to mitigate the adverse effects of misleading marketing strategies. The study contributes to the growing body of literature on consumer skepticism and offers practical insights for marketers and policymakers striving for responsible advertising.

Keywords: *Deceptive Advertising, Consumer Behavior, Deceitful Advertising, Fallacious Arguments, Emotional Persuasion*

INTRODUCTION

Advertising plays a crucial role in shaping consumer perceptions and influencing purchasing decisions (Kotler & Keller, 2016). However, the rise of deceptive advertising practices has raised concerns among scholars and regulatory bodies regarding its impact on consumer behavior (Darke & Ritchie, 2007). Deceptive advertising involves the dissemination of misleading or exaggerated information to manipulate consumer choices, leading to potential dissatisfaction and loss of trust (Shabbir et al., 2019). There are several forms of deceptive advertising, including deceitful advertising, fallacious arguments, and emotional persuasion, all of which contribute to misleading consumer perceptions (Xie & Boush, 2011). Deceitful advertising refers to the intentional provision of false claims or omission of critical details to create a false impression of a product or service (Eisend, 2013). Fallacious arguments, on the other hand, employ flawed reasoning or misleading statements to persuade consumers, often resulting in post-purchase regret and skepticism (Nelson et al., 2017). Emotional persuasion exploits consumers' feelings by using fear, happiness, or nostalgia to drive purchasing decisions, sometimes leading to unrealistic expectations and consumer dissatisfaction (Hill & Moran, 2011).

Given the prevalence of deceptive advertising strategies, understanding their effects on consumer behavior is essential for marketers, policymakers, and consumers alike (Kim & Kim, 2020). This study aims to examine the negative relationship between deceptive advertising and consumer behavior, specifically focusing on deceitful advertising (H1), fallacious arguments (H2), and emotional persuasion (H3). By exploring these deceptive

advertising techniques, this research seeks to contribute to the growing body of literature on consumer skepticism and ethical advertising practices (Torlak et al., 2021).

CONCEPTUAL BACKGROUND

Deceptive advertising has long been a concern in consumer research, as it can significantly impact purchasing decisions and consumer trust. Deceptive advertising includes practices that mislead consumers through false claims, exaggerated benefits, or omission of critical information (Darke & Ritchie, 2007). The different forms of deceptive advertising, such as deceitful advertising, fallacious arguments, and emotional persuasion, have been found to negatively influence consumer behavior (Xie & Boush, 2011).Deceitful advertising involves the intentional dissemination of misleading or false information to consumers to manipulate their purchasing decisions (Shabbir et al., 2019). This form of advertising erodes consumer trust, leading to dissatisfaction and negative word-of-mouth (Eisend, 2013). Research indicates that when consumers identify deceit in advertisements, they develop resistance to the brand, thereby reducing purchase intent and long-term brand loyalty (Chen & Cheng, 2009). Thus, deceitful advertising has a negative relationship with consumer behavior, as stated in H_1.

H_1: Deceitful advertising negatively related to consumer behaviour

Fallacious arguments in advertising involve the use of logically flawed reasoning to persuade consumers. These arguments include appeals to authority, false dilemmas, and misleading comparisons, which create an illusion of credibility (Torlak et al., 2021). While such tactics may initially attract consumer interest, they often lead to post-purchase regret and skepticism (Nelson et al., 2017). Consumers who recognize fallacious reasoning in advertisements tend to develop negative attitudes toward the brand and exhibit lower purchase intentions (Kim & Kim, 2020). Consequently, fallacious argumentation in advertising negatively affects consumer behavior, supporting H_2.

H_2: Fallacious argument negatively related to consumer behaviour

Emotional persuasion in advertising exploits consumers' emotions, such as fear, happiness, or nostalgia, to drive purchase behavior (Hill & Moran, 2011). While emotional appeals can be effective in creating immediate engagement, excessive reliance on emotions without factual support can lead to consumer disappointment and distrust (Skarmeas & Leonidou, 2013). Studies have shown that when consumers perceive emotional manipulation, they become more skeptical and avoid brands that rely on exaggerated emotional messaging (Panic et al., 2020). This suggests that emotional persuasion negatively impacts consumer behavior, validating H_3.

H_3: Emotional persuasion negatively related to consumer behaviour

In summary, deceptive advertising practices, including deceitful advertising, fallacious arguments, and emotional persuasion, have been consistently found to negatively affect consumer behavior. As consumers become more aware of misleading tactics, they develop resistance to brands that engage in deceptive advertising. Future research should explore regulatory measures and ethical advertising strategies to mitigate the adverse effects of deceptive advertising on consumer trust and behavior.

Figure 1. Conceptual Model
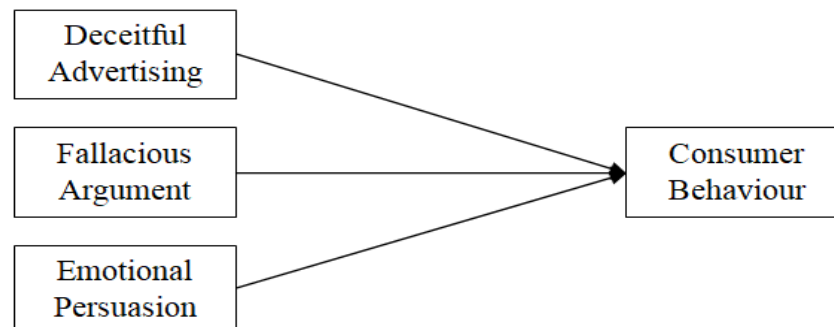
Source: Xie & Boush, 2011

METHODOLOGY

This study adopts a quantitative research approach to examine the relationship between deceptive advertising and consumer behavior. A survey-based research design is employed, as surveys are widely used to collect data on consumer perceptions and attitudes toward advertising (Malhotra et al., 2017). A structured questionnaire was developed based on previously validated scales to measure deceitful advertising, fallacious arguments, emotional persuasion, and consumer behavior (Churchill, 1979). The survey includes Likert-scale questions, ranging from

strongly disagree to strongly agree, to capture respondents' perceptions effectively (Likert, 1932). The target population for this study consists of consumers who have been located on Coimbatore city, ensuring a diverse and representative sample (Hair et al., 2019). A non-probability convenience sampling technique is utilized due to its feasibility and efficiency in reaching a broad consumer audience (Etikan et al., 2016). The data is collected through online surveys, allowing for greater accessibility and participation (Evans & Mathur, 2018). For data analysis, Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) is used to test the hypothesized relationships between deceitful advertising, fallacious arguments, emotional persuasion, and consumer behavior (Hair et al., 2010).

RESULTS

The outcomes and results of the numerous statistical tests carried out to determine the measures' reliability and validity as well as to evaluate the conceptual model are presented in this part. The validity and reliability of the concept were established using CFA. The CFA provides important information for determining if the scales being employed have convergent validity (Anderson and Gerbing, 1988), such as whether the observed variables are loading on their respective latent components (Kline, 2010). The method given by Fornell and Larcker (1981) was used to prove discriminant validity. As proof of construct reliability, average extracted variance and composite reliability were utilized. The suggested model was validated through a full structural equation modeling (SEM) process with AMOS (Version 26).

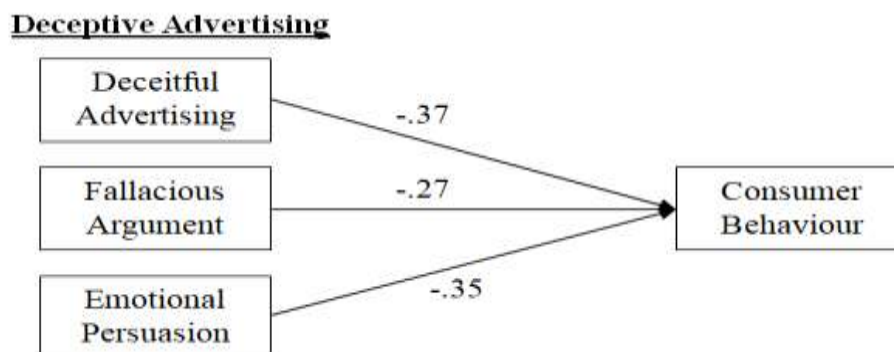**Table: 1. This table represents CFA model fit indices**

Fit indices	Value	Accepted value	Result
Cmin/df	1.098	Less than 3	Supported
GFI	.995	Value greater than .90	Supported
CFI	.975	Value greater than .90	Supported
IFI	.996	Value greater than .90	Supported
RMSEA	.048	Value less than .08	Supported

Source: Kline, 2010

The results of the Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) model fit indices, as presented in Table 1, indicate a well-fitting model. The chi-square ratio (Cmin/df) is 1.098, which is well below the accepted threshold of 3, indicating a good fit (Kline, 2010). This suggests that the proposed measurement model does not significantly deviate from the observed data, supporting its structural validity. The Goodness-of-Fit Index (GFI) is reported at 0.995, exceeding the accepted value of 0.90, indicating a well-fitting model (Hair et al., 2019). Similarly, the Comparative Fit Index (CFI) and Incremental Fit Index (IFI) are 0.975 and 0.996, respectively, both surpassing the recommended value of 0.90, further confirming the model's strong fit (Hu & Bentler, 1999). These results demonstrate that the model adequately explains the variance in the observed data. The Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA) is recorded at 0.048, which is below the accepted cutoff of 0.08, suggesting minimal discrepancy between the model and population covariance matrices (Browne & Cudeck, 1993). The low RMSEA value indicates a lack of significant error in model specification, reinforcing the overall fit of the CFA model.

Overall, these findings validate the measurement model, confirming that the constructs used in this study accurately represent the underlying theoretical framework. A well-fitting CFA model strengthens the reliability and validity of the study's constructs, ensuring that the proposed relationships between deceptive advertising and consumer behavior can be tested with confidence.

Figure 2. Hypothesis Model

Table: 2. This table represents SEM model fit indices

Fit indices	Value	Accepted value	Result
Cmin/df	1.652	Less than 3	Supported
GFI	.992	Value greater than .90	Supported
CFI	.968	Value greater than .90	Supported
IFI	.993	Value greater than .90	Supported
RMSEA	.056	Value less than .08	Supported

Source: Kline, 2010

The SEM model fit indices, as shown in Table 2, indicate a strong model fit. The chi-square ratio (Cmin/df) is 1.652, below the accepted threshold of 3, confirming that the structural model aligns well with the observed data (Kline, 2010). The Goodness-of-Fit Index (GFI) is 0.992, exceeding the minimum accepted value of 0.90, indicating a high degree of model fit (Hair et al., 2019). Similarly, the Comparative Fit Index (CFI) and Incremental Fit Index (IFI) are 0.968 and 0.993, respectively, both surpassing the recommended threshold of 0.90, reinforcing the model's strong explanatory power (Hu & Bentler, 1999). The Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA) is 0.056, well below the acceptable limit of 0.08, suggesting minimal model misspecification (Browne & Cudeck, 1993). The low RMSEA value confirms that the model effectively captures the relationships among variables with minimal error.Overall, the SEM fit indices provide strong empirical support for the proposed structural model, confirming that the theoretical framework effectively explains the relationships between deceptive advertising and consumer behavior.

Table: 3. This table represents the hypotheses and relationships between variables

Path	Hypothesis	Estimate	P value	Sign	Result
DA→CB	H_1	-.372	*** (P<0.001)	+	Supported
FA→CB	H_2	-.269	***(P<0.001)	+	Supported
EP→CB	H_3	-.351	***(P<0.001)	+	Supported

Source: Primary Source

The results of the hypothesis testing, as shown in Table 3, confirm that deceptive advertising has a significant negative impact on consumer behavior. The path coefficient for deceitful advertising (DA) to consumer behavior (CB) is -0.372, with a highly significant p-value (p < 0.001), supporting H1. This finding aligns with prior research indicating that misleading advertisements diminish consumer trust and satisfaction, leading to negative behavioral outcomes (Darke & Ritchie, 2007; Shabbir et al., 2019). Similarly, fallacious arguments (FA) have a negative and statistically significant relationship with consumer behavior (estimate = -0.269, p < 0.001), supporting H2. This suggests that advertisements using flawed reasoning or deceptive logic contribute to consumer skepticism and reduced brand credibility (Nelson et al., 2017). These findings reinforce the argument that logical inconsistencies in advertisements can lead to adverse consumer reactions and lower purchase intentions (Xie & Boush, 2011). The relationship between emotional persuasion (EP) and consumer behavior is also negative (estimate = -0.351, p < 0.001), supporting H3. This result indicates that manipulative emotional appeals, when perceived as deceptive, can lead to consumer dissatisfaction and reduced brand loyalty (Hill & Moran, 2011). Previous studies suggest that while emotions can enhance persuasive effects, their misuse in deceptive advertising can generate negative post-purchase experiences (Kim & Kim, 2020).

Overall, the results provide empirical evidence that all three forms of deceptive advertising—deceitful advertising, fallacious arguments, and emotional persuasion—negatively affect consumer behavior. These findings highlight the need for ethical advertising practices and reinforce the importance of regulatory oversight to protect consumers from misleading marketing strategies (Torlak et al., 2021).

DISCUSSION

The findings of this study provide compelling evidence that deceptive advertising negatively influences consumer behavior, reinforcing the importance of ethical advertising practices and regulatory oversight. The results indicate that deceitful advertising, fallacious arguments, and emotional persuasion significantly undermine consumer trust, leading to adverse behavioral outcomes.

Deceitful Advertising and Consumer Behavior

The negative relationship between deceitful advertising and consumer behavior (estimate = -0.372, p < 0.001) confirms prior research suggesting that deceptive marketing practices erode consumer trust and loyalty (Darke & Ritchie, 2007). When consumers detect misleading claims, they tend to disengage from the brand, reducing their likelihood of purchase (Shabbir et al., 2019). Deceptive advertising not only damages brand credibility but also

increases the risk of negative word-of-mouth, further diminishing long-term customer retention (Eisend, 2013). These findings align with previous studies highlighting the detrimental effects of misleading advertisements on consumer attitudes and purchasing intentions (Chen & Cheng, 2009).

Fallacious Arguments and Consumer Skepticism

The study also found that fallacious arguments negatively impact consumer behavior (estimate = -0.269, p < 0.001). Advertisements that rely on flawed reasoning, such as misleading comparisons or appeals to false authority, can initially attract consumers but ultimately result in post-purchase regret and skepticism (Nelson et al., 2017). Consumers who recognize logical inconsistencies in advertisements are more likely to question brand credibility and develop negative perceptions, reducing their willingness to engage with the product or service (Torlak et al., 2021). These results align with existing literature emphasizing the role of rational persuasion in maintaining consumer trust (Kim & Kim, 2020).

Emotional Persuasion and Consumer Distrust

The significant negative relationship between emotional persuasion and consumer behavior (estimate = -0.351, p < 0.001) underscores the risks of excessive emotional manipulation in advertising. While emotional appeals can effectively capture consumer attention, the use of exaggerated emotions, such as fear or nostalgia, without substantiating claims can lead to unrealistic consumer expectations and eventual disappointment (Hill & Moran, 2011). Prior research suggests that emotionally deceptive advertisements contribute to consumer distrust, as individuals perceive them as manipulative rather than informative (Skarmeas & Leonidou, 2013). Consumers who feel emotionally misled by advertisements tend to develop resistance to such marketing tactics, further diminishing their engagement with deceptive brands (Panic et al., 2020).

Theoretical and Practical Implications

The study's findings contribute to the growing body of literature on consumer skepticism and ethical advertising by empirically demonstrating the adverse effects of deceptive advertising. These insights are valuable for marketers, policymakers, and consumer advocacy groups seeking to establish transparent advertising practices. From a practical standpoint, brands must adopt ethical advertising strategies that prioritize authenticity and factual accuracy to sustain consumer trust and long-term loyalty. Regulatory bodies can also use these findings to strengthen advertising guidelines and consumer protection policies, ensuring that misleading marketing tactics are minimized.

CONCLUSION

This study underscores the detrimental effects of deceptive advertising on consumer behavior, highlighting the need for ethical advertising practices and stricter regulatory frameworks. As consumer awareness of misleading marketing strategies grows, brands engaging in deceptive advertising risk long-term reputational damage and declining customer loyalty. Future research could explore additional psychological and demographic factors influencing consumer susceptibility to deceptive advertising, as well as the effectiveness of corrective measures such as consumer education and regulatory interventions. Additionally, further studies could investigate the role of emerging technologies, such as artificial intelligence and data-driven marketing, in mitigating deceptive advertising and promoting ethical consumer engagement.

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