

Investigating The Relationship Between Consumer Manipulation And Consumer Attitudes Towards Advertisement

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ABSTRACT

This study explores the complex connection between consumer manipulation and consumer perceptions about commercials, using a wide range of primary and secondary data gathering methods. Data was collected from a sample of 385 customers who were randomly selected. This data was obtained using standardized questionnaires that were given to individuals who were interacting with the promoted items. The primary findings were complemented by secondary data obtained from reliable web sites. The study utilized a stratified random sampling method to collect data. The acquired data was then carefully examined utilizing statistical tools such as Mean, Standard Deviation, and Correlation in Excel and SPSS to assess the study's assumptions. This work has revealed useful insights into the dynamics of consumer manipulation and its influence on attitudes towards commercials. It has provided a better understanding of important aspects of consumer behavior in modern marketing environments.

Keywords: consumer manipulation, consumer attitudes, Digitization, advertisement

1. Introduction

Advertising encompasses several facets. A streamlined and visually appealing presentation of product or service details is an effort by organizations to grab the attention of their target audience. Promoting goods through advertisements is another form of marketing. Included in the marketing plan, it is crucial. Advertising is essential because it informs a large number of people about a product or service all at once. Businesses and groups employ this sort of sponsored communication when they want to disseminate information. The goal of advertising is to reach a certain demographic with a targeted message. The term "advertising" has become common parlance. This message might be seen and heard in many different locations, such as on television, in newspapers, on postal trucks, skywriting, and other similar phenomena. Customers need to know about the availability and benefits of the many items and services that are available. Advertising isn't only about informing people; it should also sway their opinions. Keep in mind that ads can serve two purposes: informing and convincing (Chunawalla et al., 2000). With the rise of new technology and social conventions, consumers' perspectives on marketing have changed drastically.

Any type of commercially produced and disseminated message to the general audience is, in essence, advertising. The American Marketing Association (AMA) defines advertising as "any paid type of non-personal display and promotion of goods, services, and ideas by an acknowledged sponsor.". Advertising, according to Stanton, is "a non-personal, clearly acknowledged sponsor-funded statement promoting a commodity or organization.".

The future of the sector depends on the widespread use of advertisements across various media platforms. India is seeing fast economic growth, which might be good news for advertisers looking to capitalise on the country's proliferation of media channels. Many people's spending power has increased alongside the economy, leading to a more brand-conscious consumer base. Because of this, companies are investing more resources into advertising their goods and services in order to establish solid brand identities (Tyagi and Kumar, 2004). The advertising industry in India is predicted to reach a value of INR 631 billion by 2022. The IMARC Group projects that the market would expand at a CAGR of over 11% from 2021 to 2026. It is

currently impossible to predict how the COVID-19 pandemic would influence the many end-use sectors in which people are employed. This data has been included because the study is significant.

The advertising sector in India is anticipated to see the second-fastest growth rate in Asia during the next few years, after only China. This increase is attributable to a number of factors. Digital advertising is becoming more accessible as the country's smartphone and internet penetration rates rise. A growing population and supportive policies from the government also play a role in the economy's progress.

1.1 Emergence of Advertisements

Hawkers started peddling their wares to the public as far back as the first cities and marketplaces. At this period, everything like signage, trademarks, and newspaper ads started to change. Classified advertisements were the first form of commercial advertising. India's first newspaper, Hickey's Bengal Gazette, ran the nation's first advertising. Studio advertisements are the first of several Indian-made commercials that have supplanted their English-made counterparts. Strong types, elegant fonts, and larger ads were the intended output of the studios. Newspaper studios, which are still in operation today, were the homes of the first crop of visual storytellers and illustrators (Pope, 2003). During this time, whiteway and laidlaw, Spencer's, and Army & Navy were major players in the retail marketing industry. Retail catalogs from the early 20th century are good examples of catalogs used as promotional tools.

The media industry originated in the news journals published by Anglo-Indian and European authors in the latter half of the eighteenth century. Many different approaches to advertising goods and services have contributed to the evolution of advertisements throughout time. Ads in the modern era are works of art that incorporate many different forms of visual and auditory media. Nevertheless, the objective is to communicate with and persuade the largest potential audience at all times. Commercials center on mass marketing since direct door-to-door or personal sales are less effective and costly. Consequently, in the fiercely competitive market for consumer spending, advertising plays a pivotal role (Mögele and Tropp, 2010).

1.2 Types of Advertising

• Direct Mail

This is among the first types of advertising that are still in use today. One strategy is to use the ordinary mail to send a letter to prospective clients. The process involves building a mailing list specifically for that objective. Direct mail advertising includes catalogs, calendars, booklets, folders, and circular letters. The sales letter addresses the buyers independently. It details every aspect of the product. (Stafford, et. al., 2003).

• Newspapers And Magazines

There is no more important kind of press than newspapers, which serve as the most effective and widely read form of advertising. Newspapers include a multitude of information on current happenings. To call it "a storehouse of information" would be slightly inaccurate. Every day, every week, and every two weeks, a new newspaper is released. Newspapers reach more people than any other medium. One have local, state, and national newspapers accessible.

Important forms of media include, among others, periodicals and journals. When a magazine is published, it is determined by its goals. Their readership is far more enthusiastic compared to newspapers. Magazine ads outshine billboards in terms of depth and aesthetic appeal. There are periodicals for the fields of business, commerce, economics, and finance. One may easily find magazines aimed at men, women, and kids. Magazines are a fantastic medium for advertising and marketing certain products due to their extended shelf life (Chandra and Kaiser, 2015).

• Radio Advertising

Radio commercials are a typical kind of advertising these days. Advertising on the radio is effective because it reaches people of all educational backgrounds. Distributing goods to the masses in this way is a brilliant marketing strategy. Due to its wider reach, this form of media attracts more viewers. Consequently, it allows for more rapid recall (Weinberger and Campbell, 1991).

• Television Advertising

Since it is the most recent and cutting-edge kind of advertising, its use is increasing. Because of the visuals and audio, it is able to reach more people than radio does. Its visual presentation makes a stronger impression and keeps the audience's attention for a longer period of time (Joo, et. al., 2014).

• Film Advertising

This is also known as cinema advertising. Just like a TV, it has the ability to see and hear. They aren't mass-produced by businesses and then sold to theaters for public viewing before or during regular shows (Elliott and Simmons, 2011).

• Outdoor Advertising

Electric displays or neon signs, sandwichmen, skywriting, placards, and posters are among of the mediums utilized in this type of advertising. The term "mural advertising" can also describe this. The goal of outdoor advertising is to capture people's attention in the blink of an eye. Advertising the service or product in this way is sure to bring in the maximum customers (Bhargava, et. al., 1993).

• Fairs and Exhibition

At a fair or trade expo, a diverse group of vendors and producers come together to sell their products to the many people that attend the event. The production company might be based in a city, province, or even another country. Global audiences go to yearly trade shows such as EXPO 70 in Japan, ASIA 72 in Singapore, and the most recent trade show in Delhi (Taylor, 2018).

1.3 Manipulative Advertisement

To portray a product or service to an audience in the most effective way possible is the goal of manipulative advertising, a type of persuasive advertising. Contrasted with manipulative advertising, which plays up the product's positive aspects while downplaying its negative ones, non-manipulative advertising shows the product's strengths and traits. Commercials mislead consumers, make exaggerated claims, and even threaten legal action in an effort to sway their future purchases. Since it provides consumers with convincing information in a rational and honest manner, non-manipulative advertising is the true form. Since then, marketers and advertisers have operated under a strict code of ethics. (Beauchamp, et. al., 1984).

1.4 Visual Techniques of Manipulation

Many advertisements, visible in nearly every medium, use a combination of visual and blended methods to sway consumers. Photo editing, merging entertainment and advertising, changing product dimensions and prices, and using misleading visuals are among the most prevalent tactics.

➤ The Manipulation by Photo Shopping

A plethora of alternatives for modifying visual advertisements are made available by the advanced technology. The technique of "photoshopping," in which photographs are edited to make them look different from their original state, has grown in popularity in recent years. Image and vector editing programs like Gimp, CorelDRAW, Illustrator, and Photoshop may be used to accomplish this strategy. When one retouch images, one can do more than just mend and improve them; you can also add brilliant colors, backdrops, vector designs, and 3D objects. Basic colors include red, yellow, and blue, which represent quickness and simplicity.

➤ The mixture of the amusement with ads

Some companies' advertisements for food goods masquerade as entertainment. This is especially appealing to kids when seen on TV, but grownups enjoy it too. Due to the addictive nature of video games, advertisers may legally promote unhealthy eating on television (Messaris, 1994).

➤ The manipulation of the size and the price of the product

Reducing the product's size may be an option if sales and earnings are declining as a result. For smaller products, the ability to adjust the size of an item while maintaining the same pricing is beneficial.

➤ The misleading graphs

Overly complicated or badly built graphs can be used to deceive. Incorrect scaling, missing data on the axes, improper data extraction, and other similar issues are frequently used to create these deceptive visuals. Miscalculation of the y-axis maximum gives the wrong impression. The improper scaling creates a perceptual leading comparison, which makes the lines appear steeper at lower maximums and gives the sense of less volatility and growth (Lam, et. al., 2018).

1.5 Consumer Manipulation and Attitudes Toward Advertising

People are more prone to buy things they don't need when they're the targets of consumer deception. Many middle-class people, influenced by this mindset, feel pressured to buy little replicas of famous artists or public figures so they can fit in with the latest trends. The degree to which an advertising is true also affects its authority and persuasive power. Sceptics of contemporary advertising argue that it might cause significant losses for a flourishing industry by manipulating consumers' attention away from ads. By making the consumer feel threatened, this tactic redirects their focus and applies psychological pressure to buy things they don't actually need, desire, or intend to use. Advertising, according to college students, is one of the main causes of people buying things they don't need or want. Students are either distracted or disturbed by the constant stream of music and dance commercials on television, and the content of some ads is crucial in building a positive reputation for the brand (Eze, et. al., 2012).

Apart from the introduction, the rest of the paper is structured as follows: section 2 describes reviews of different authors from past studies related to the relationship between consumer manipulation and consumer attitudes towards advertisement, section 3 summarizes objectives, section 4 states the hypothesis, section 5 explains the research methods, Section 6 interpret the results from the analysis, section 7 describes the discussion and findings and Section 8 states implications, limitations, and recommendations for Further Studies and section 9 Concludes the study. Finally, after that references are presented.

2. Review of literature

Production and distribution of advertising materials were traditionally managed by humans using analogy instruments. In contrast, technology advancements provided digital and automated tools to the advertising business, enabling them to automate numerous advertising operations and create "synthetic ads," commercials that utilized artificially produced and modified data (**Campbell, et.al., 2022**). Similarly, **Park, et.al., (2022)** investigated the connection between the COVID-19 risk and how customers rated products that used authenticity claims in marketing. The study focused on consumers' perceptions of ad authenticity and the relationship between danger and childhood socioeconomic level.

Sreejesh, et.al., (2020) analyzed how consumers responded to social media advertisements, and the part played by interactive media. Interactivity had a negative impact on consumer ad reactions, as revealed by a between-subjects research. It also suggested that these negative impacts could have been reduced by effectively utilizing message-relevant elements. Similarly, **An, et.al., (2019)** assessed consumers' formed their initial impressions of native advertisements that appeared in news feeds. More specifically, it focused on the advertising identification process that occurred when viewers realized that what they had believed to be news items were actually advertisements. Manipulative intent and message engagement were found to have mediated the results, leading to a decrease in brand attitude, purchase intention, and sharing intention. Research in sensory marketing has demonstrated the vast potential of sensory images to generate sensory consumer experiences. Using sensory images to appeal to the senses appeared to be a promising strategy, particularly in the food and drink advertising setting. **Haase, et.al., (2020)** aimed to fill in these blanks by focusing on two distinct areas of study. The first part of the study analysed how sensory imagery affected three marketing KPIs: attitude, perceived product design, and sensory perception. On the contrary, **Gaber, et.al., (2019)** investigated to what extent did Instagram ads in Egypt influence customer sentiment? In addition, the findings confirmed that consumers' opinions towards Instagram ads had a positive impact on their sentiments towards the advertised companies.

Advertising that appeals to consumers' emotions often makes use of storytelling techniques. Considering this, **Kang, et.al., (2020)** tested the impact of narrative engagement on participants' positive emotional responses and intentions to share product information in radio advertising depending on the quality of storytelling. **Yu, J. (2020)** examined that there were two levels of consumer responses to green advertising: a general scepticism towards green advertising and a personalized attitude towards the green ad (Agreen-ad). The impacts of gender and SKEP on both levels were examined. Agreen-ad's one-dimensionality was evident in the results, which revealed that the utilitarian dimension was particularly influenced by gender and SKEP effects when assessed separately.

Neuromarketing makes use of neuroimaging methods, made possible by the development of neuroscience, to investigate people's everyday behaviors and conduct marketing campaigns. **AL SHARIF, et. al., (2021)** described that throughout the evolution of neuromarketing, researchers have utilized it to evaluate how individuals responded to marketing stimuli. **Machová et.al., (2022)** examined the influence of eco-friendly advertising on the purchasing habits of buyers of palm oil products. It seems that the majority of buyers did not read the fine print on the product packaging, based on the results.

3. Objectives

Objective: To determine the relation between consumer manipulation and consumer attitudes towards advertisement.

4. Hypothesis

H_{0a}: There is no significant relationship between Consumer manipulation and consumer attitudes towards advertisement.

H_{1a}: There is a significant relationship between Consumer manipulation and consumer attitudes towards advertisement.

5. Research Methods

"Investigating the relationship between consumer manipulation and consumer attitudes towards advertisement" was determined via the use of primary and secondary data gathering methods in the study. The study is quantitative and exploratory in nature. The main data is gathered from investors using a standardized questionnaire that is selected at random. 385 customers as well as the same consumers using the advertisement for their product were given the questionnaires to fill out. The study area of the study is Punjab. Websites, newspapers, articles, and other reputable online sources made up the bulk of the study's secondary data. Random sampling was used in the investigation. The data has been analyzed using Excel and SPSS. This study has tested its hypothesis using the following statistical tools: Mean, SD, and Correlation.

6. Results

Table 1: Demographic Characteristics

Sr. No.	DC (Demographic Characteristics)	Group	Number	Percentage
1	Gender	Female	185	48.1%
		Male	200	51.9%
2	Age	21-30 years	133	34.5%
		31-40 years	118	30.6%
		41-50 years	77	20.0%
		51-60 years	57	14.8%
3	Type of Education	Graduate	180	46.8%
		Postgraduate	141	36.6%
		Others	64	16.6%
4	Income Level	25000	112	29.1%
		50000	129	33.5%
		75000	50	13.0%
		100000 and above	94	24.4%
5	Professional status	Lower Management	145	37.7%
		Middle Management	156	40.5%
		Top Management	84	21.8%
6	Residence	Fatehgarh Sahib	102	26.5%
		Ludhiana	119	30.9%
		Moga	87	22.6%
		Shahid Bhagat Singh Nagar	77	20.0%

The Table 1 presents demographic attributes such as gender, age distribution, educational attainment, income, occupational status, and place of residence for a representative sample of the population. The respondents are almost equally divided by gender, with females making up 48.1% and males accounting for 51.9%. The majority of individuals in the sample are between the ages of 21 and 40, accounting for a combined total of 65.1%. The next largest age group is between 41 and 50, representing 20.0%, followed by those between 51 and 60, making up 14.8%. Regarding education, the majority of individuals, accounting for 46.8%, are graduates. Postgraduates make up the second largest group at 36.6%, while 16.6% fall into the "Others" category. The distribution of income levels is very uniform throughout the four groups, with 33.5% of individuals falling into the 50000 categories, followed closely by those earning 25000 (29.1%), 100000 and above (24.4%), and 75000 (13.0%). From a professional standpoint, the most prevalent group is middle management, accounting for 40.5% of the total. This is followed by lower management, which makes up 37.7%, and top management, which represents 21.8%. Ludhiana is the largest residential area geographically, accounting for 30.9% of the total. Fatehgarh Sahib comes next with 26.5%, followed by Moga with 22.6%, and Shahid Bhagat Singh Nagar with 20.0%. In general, the data offers a thorough overview of the demographic composition of the population that was polled.

H0a: There is no significant relationship between Consumer manipulation and consumer attitudes towards advertisement.

H1a: There is a significant relationship between Consumer manipulation and consumer attitudes towards advertisement.

Table 2: Descriptive Statistics			
	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
Consumer attitude towards advertisements	27.3299	5.28833	385
Manipulative advertisement	23.4338	5.32353	385

The aforementioned descriptive table 2 includes valuable descriptive statistics, including the "mean score and standard deviation". According to Table 4.16, the Mean and SD of Consumer attitude towards advertisements are 27.3299 and 5.28833, and the Mean and SD of Manipulative advertisement are 23.4338 and 5.32353.

Table 3: Correlations			
		Consumer attitude towards advertisements	Manipulative advertisement
Consumer attitude towards advertisements	Pearson Correlation	1	.146**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.004
	N	385	385
Manipulative advertisement	Pearson Correlation	.146**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.004	
	N	385	385
**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).			

The above table 3 defines the correlation between Consumer attitudes toward advertisements and Manipulative advertisements. According to the result, there is statistically a significant correlation between Mass communication and Manipulative advertisement because the sig value is 0.004 (sig value is less than the standard value i.e., 0.05).

7. Discussion and Findings

As with the digital revolution, the modes of advertisement are rapidly changing. Rhee and Jung (2019) explored the conflicting results in advertising appeal research, revealing that brand familiarity determines the effectiveness of advertising appeal, and that ad attitudes predict consumer attitudes. However, the present study provides compelling evidence supporting the hypothesis that there exists a significant relationship between consumer manipulation and consumer attitudes towards advertisements. This conclusion is bolstered by the robust descriptive statistics reveal mean scores and standard deviations for both consumer attitudes towards advertisements and manipulative advertisements.

On the other hand, Campbell, C., et. al., (2022) noted that technological advancements have enabled the advertising industry to automate processes, leading to the rise of synthetic ads using artificial intelligence techniques like deepfakes and GANs. The study explored consumer responses to these sophisticated forms of ad manipulation. Notably, the correlation coefficient highlights a positive relationship between consumer attitudes towards advertisements and manipulative advertisements. With a significance level of .004, well below the conventional threshold of 0.05, this finding underscores the salience of consumer manipulation in shaping attitudes toward advertisements. Hence, the present study offers a nuanced understanding of the dynamics between consumer manipulation and attitudes toward advertisements, contributing substantively to the existing literature in the field of mass communication and advertising.

8. Implication, Limitations and Recommendations for further studies

The importance of ethical advertising techniques in influencing customer perceptions and actions is highlighted by the implications of the examination into the link between consumer manipulation and consumer attitudes towards advertisement. According to the results, consumers' perceptions may be greatly impacted by deceptive advertising practices, which might cause them to become skeptical, distrustful, or even react negatively. Further research into certain manipulative tactics and their varied effects across different demographic groups is necessary, and the study's dependence on self-reported data, which may introduce biases, is another potential limitation. Alternative approaches that emphasize honesty and openness in marketing communications should be investigated, the efficacy of regulatory measures in reducing manipulative advertising practices should be studied, and the psychological mechanisms that make consumers vulnerable to manipulation should be further investigated.

9. Conclusion

At last, the current study clarifies the complex interplay between advertising attitudes and consumer manipulation. After careful analysis, it's clear that advertising uses consumer manipulation strategies to sway consumers' opinions and views. Advertisers can influence customer behavior and sentiments through subtle persuasive tactics or more obvious manipulation. While manipulative approaches may have a favourable effect on customer views in the short term, they frequently result in long-term suspicion and skepticism, thus it's important to recognize the intricacy of this connection. Consequently, marketers who want to build authentic relationships with their audience while staying true to their ethical principles in the dynamic world of consumer culture must have a deep awareness of the subtleties of consumer manipulation and how it affects advertising.

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