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The Impact of Deceptive Advertising and Moral Violation on Negative Word of Mouth Mediating role of Brand Hate

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Abstract

The purpose of this paper is to investigate the effects of consumer deceptive Advertising and moral violations by brands on to brand hate and how brand hate results in spreading negative word of mouth. Primary data was collected through questionnaires. To know the impact of the variables 150 questionnaires were distributed among university students of Central Punjab and Islamabad region. Results show that deceptive advertising directly impacts negative word of mouth while moral violations have no impact in this study context. Brand hate mediates the relationship between deceptive advertising and negative word of mouth. This study is helpful for clothing line brands of Pakistan in order to capture consumers by giving quality and try to avoid negative experiences of consumers so that consumers do not start hating the brand and which may not result in spreading negative word of mouth from consumer perspective.

Keywords: Deceptive Advertising, Moral Violations, Brand Hate, Negative Word of Mouth

Introduction

Relationships between consumers and brands significantly impact organizations' marketing strategies and day-to-day operations. Different brands evoke different feelings in different consumers. Some clients feel good about it, while others feel bad (Zarantonello et al., 2016). Many studies have focused on people's pleasant emotions when they think about companies, but customers' negative emotions have gotten far less attention. Antagonism towards a brand is known as "brand hate" (Hegner et al., 2017). Human psychology suggests that pleasant memories stick with us much longer than unpleasant ones. People tend to spread the word about negative encounters to everyone they can. As Douglas Bryson et al. (2013) put it, "negative word of mouth" describes the propagation of such animosity. From a business perspective, these negative feelings are troublesome since, with the internet, customers may effortlessly share their negative feedback with others.

Blogs and social media also make it easy for hate speech to travel internationally. It hurts a company's global reputation, which in turn hurts its sales and brand image (Salvatore, 2006). There are entire websites that focus on criticizing brands to make consumers feel bad about their purchases by discussing negative customer experiences and highlighting the brand's flaws

(Kavaliauskė & Simanavičiūtė, 2015). Essentially, brand hate stems from customers' negative past experiences. Customers tend to avoid certain brands when they have negative experiences with their products or services, whether with in-store or after-sale assistance, and those issues are either not rectified or remain persistent. These negative feelings might grow into full-blown hatred over time. People start to talk trash about the company and spread negativity when they acquire hate for it (Chiosa & Anastasiei, 2017). There is a negative role for businesses when it comes to moral violations. For example, consider the "Abercrombie & Fitch" clothing line, which caters exclusively to physically appealing or with perfect body types. Also, the business has said that it's not for low-income people; it's only for the well-off.

The statement was made by the chief executive officer of the Abercrombie & Fitch brand (Beneke et al., 2016). Customers immediately stopped buying from the company out of animosity, and the brand's reputation and sales took a hit due to the C.E.O.'s immoral statement. Companies' immoral actions cause consumers to associate negative connotations with such brands (Plotkina & Munzel, 2016). Based on previous research (Balaji et al., 2016), this study investigates the relationship between consumers' animosity towards companies and the poor word-of-mouth that follows from consumers' perceptions of businesses' unethical behavior. The brands Gul Ahmad, Nishat Linen, and Alkaram are the subjects of this study, centering around the Pakistani consumer market for clothes. To identify the causes of the negative perceptions of these three brands, we will poll consumers who buy them. The marketing managers of the aforementioned apparel firms can use this study as a guide to fine-tune their strategies and prevent consumers from offending their brands.

Literature Review

Deceptive Advertising

The rule of thumb is that when people aren't bringing success into their lives, people tend to distance themselves from them (Ross & Wilson, 2002). When rooting for a particular team, supporters may say things like "we won" or "they lost" when the team they support wins (Kent & Keohane, 2001). There is a well-defined goal behind their acts. People would rather relax in reflected victory than face the prospect of reflected failure. Scientists postulated that administrative emotions drove the attitude (Crocker & Major, 1989). Worst case scenario: unfavorable rumours spread like wildfire and eventually became more extensive stories than the real world. The power to swiftly disseminate negative views through a highly developed medium and online life compounds the problem. Quickly disseminated information might result from a single post going viral. For all we know, it could spark an open dialogue about past traumas (Hornik et al., 2019).

Negative word of mouth

The marketing strategy relied heavily on word-of-mouth since it informed consumers about the product, the business, and its standing in the industry. Whether good or unfavorable, customers usually spread the word about a company through deceptive advertising regarding the product and its image (Clark & Teasdale, 1982). Most authors focused on positive and negative verbal exchanges, but both mentioned them. Discussing them usually involves new product education (disseminating advancements), not buyer talks regarding existing items. Last but not least, pioneers may not be those who participate in destructive word-of-mouth exercises. A survey of studies examined the effects of misleading advertising on buyers (Weinberger et al., 1981). The media and general press were overshadowed by word of mouth. The public is led to believe untruths when people knowingly post negative reviews or disseminate unflattering news. Data

collected for the first time tends to be more accurate (Dichter, 1966). Consequently, businesses relied on surveys, contextual studies, and positive testimonials to boost sales. Positive direct data foster transformative power and confidence. Negative word of mouth had an adverse effect (Singh, 1990). Research on customer complaining attitudes was associated with several definitions across multiple subject fields. Those were the proven/unproven structures, as stated by Oliver (1980).

Brand Hate

D. Bryson et al. (2010) state that consumers show their negative emotional connection to a brand when they dislike it, and their positive and good relationship with the brand is demonstrated when they love it. A customer's negativity, boycott, or disapproval of a company's assets can be characterized as brand hate, as can the act of wilfully ignoring or rejecting the brand (Sheeran, 2002). Explain how utter contempt for a brand's demeanour could be shown through brand hatred. A person's attitude has been linked to their behavioral intentions and actions. It is possible to dislike a brand because it represents a way of life or a philosophy. It is possible to dislike a brand because it represents a particular ideology or way of life. A comparable high probability of someone disliking a group of individuals associated with a brand was also seen. Additionally, consumers may develop negative feelings towards a brand due to low-quality products (Salvatori, 2006).

Moral Violation

Whenever an individual crosses a line established by law, an ethical standard, a physical limitation, or a breached contract in the workplace. The thief's act of picking the lock on your door constituted an invasion of your privacy. According to Berthouzet al. (2006), a breach could be an impolite display or invading another person's personal space. The foundation of morality is a system of rules that aims to regulate group dynamics and encourage harmonious living. To avoid being rejected by one's peers and to foster group cohesion, it was necessary to internalize the social norms and rules. Reason, not emotion, is the bedrock of moral judgement, according to the bulk of philosophical literature on moral experience. A growing amount of research in that field, however, has shown that moral judgements are rooted in instinctive, emotional, and automatic processes. Morality was based on the ability to differentiate between right and wrong actions, which was important for people and society (Mullen & Nadler, 2008). Still, numerous areas of study have focused on developing moral attitudes and ideals.

Deceptive Advertising and Negative word of mouth

Negative word-of-mouth can be described as unfavorable, difficult-to-manage attention from a reliable source. Previous research suggests that how a marketer ends a business relationship influences the likelihood that a client will spread negative word of mouth. Xue and Zhou (2010) found that when customers had a negative experience with a readily available brand, they were more likely to spread the word about it. It is because poor experiences are contagious. Consumers would have provided positive reviews for a brand if they had a good experience with it; on the other hand, negative reviews would have been supplied if the customer had a negative experience, and misleading advertising is the cause of negative word-of-mouth (Jones, Aiken, & Boush, 2009).

H1: There is a significant relationship between deceptive advertising and negative word of mouth.

Moral violation and Negative word of mouth

Negative word-of-mouth happens when many consumers experience the same issue with a business or its products. When an individual or group acts with integrity, they adhere to the moral ideals and standards held in high regard by their peers and the community (Romani et al., 2015). Thus, violations of these moral ideals and principles might be defined as breaches of integrity. It was the organization's responsibility to produce a brand for sale that was in line with the standards and beliefs of the local community. Customers are more likely to talk adversely of a brand when they feel it doesn't share their moral values; this happens when companies lie to customers or fail to deliver on their promises (Donavan et al., 1999).

H2: There is a significant relationship between moral violation and negative word of mouth.

Brand Hate as a Mediator

Negative emotions, like a positive response to a specific use of experience, indicated discontent, according to Woodruff et al. (1983). Although dissatisfaction is a major contributor to complaining attitude, it only explains a small fraction of that attitude (Day & Bodur, 1978). According to Said, who also inquired about what the respondents had done after their worst customer service experience, only around 20% to 35% of those people had reported to the marketer. Consumers shop in the market to meet wants and needs, but if they have a negative experience with a product, they may not buy from that firm again or be loyal to its brand because of their negative feelings about the product. The product's use, warranty, or expiration date may have contributed to its malfunction (Zarantonello et al., 2016).

H3: brand hate mediates the relationship between deceptive advertising and negative word of mouth. When a product was released to the market, people felt bad and loathed it because it didn't conform to cultural norms in language, religion, society, and other areas and broke society's moral standards (Murray et al., 2019). The ideological justifications for ignoring the brand, such as supporting reason or advancement, were based on moral violations (Lee et al., 2009).

H4: brand hate mediates the relationship between moral violations and negative word of mouth. Poor word of mouth immediately affected business, but that shouldn't be the end. Customers may feel more at ease and make better long-term purchases if given the chance to try something new. It is particularly true when individuals track their transformation through various online networking media outlets after undergoing a novel event. The most recent study finds that expenditure increased by 58% when a negative commenter had a positive experience. Organizations can enhance positive aspects while decreasing negative ones (Chung & Lee, 2019).

H5: There is a significant relationship between brand hate and negative word of mouth.

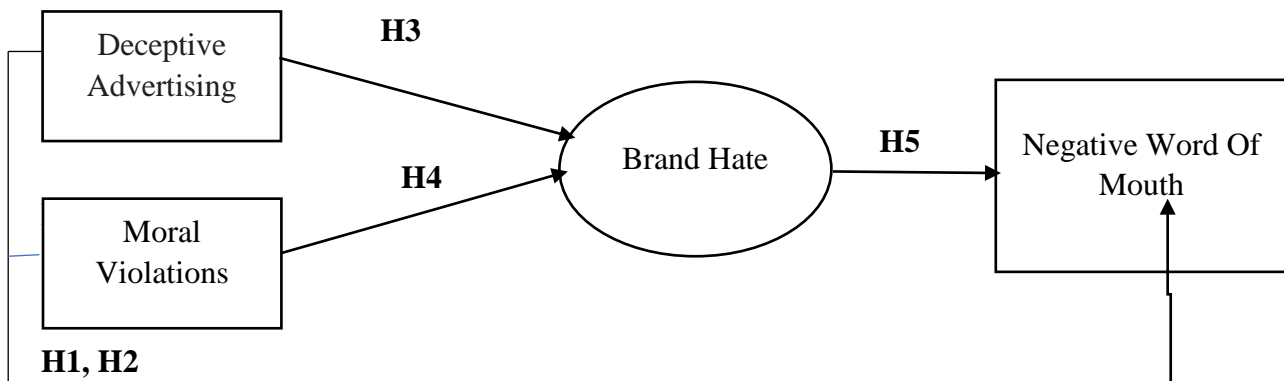


Figure 1. Theoretical framework

Research Methodology

Participants are drawn from the educational sectors of Islamabad and Central Punjab. The academic industry aimed its products at university students. Four educational institutions were considered: SZABIST Islamabad, COMSATS Islamabad, the University of the Punjab, and the University of Central Punjab. The study's sample size is 150 college students. We used a simple random sampling strategy for primary data collection. This sampling method ensures that each respondent has an equal chance of being selected from the population.

Instrument

The data was collected from the participants via a questionnaire. Using a questionnaire allowed for the collection of precise and accurate data. Factors and literature reviews informed the revisions made to the questionnaire for use in the research. As part of the demographic section of the survey, we included 18 questions regarding unethical advertising practices, poor word of mouth, brand hatred, and misleading advertising.

Measurement

In this study, several scales were employed to quantify the variables. A five-point Likert scale was used to rate each question. For the purpose of measuring misleading advertising on a five-point Likert scale, four items were selected from the Hegner et al. (2017) scale. To measure moral violation using a five-point Likert scale, four items were selected from the Hegner et al. (2017) scale. To measure brand hatred, five questions from the Zarantonello et al. (2016) scale were selected using a five-point Likert scale. The negative word-of-mouth was also measured by selecting five items from the five-point Likert scale developed by Zarantonello et al. (2016). A Likert-type scale was utilized, where 1 signifies strongly disagree, 2 disagrees, 3 is neutral, 4 agrees, and 5 strongly agrees.

Procedure

This study was conducted at four universities in Pakistan: SZABIST Islamabad, COMSATS Islamabad, University of the Punjab, and University of Central Punjab. In this survey, college students were the target audience. Researchers informed students about the study's focus before collecting primary data from them using a questionnaire after they gave their informed consent. Participants filled out surveys just in front of the study's investigators. The convenience of the universities in question was a deciding factor in their selection.

Results and Discussions

The results and primary data were entered and analyzed using SPSS. SPSS analyzed all the data relevant to moral infractions, brand hatred, deceptive advertising, and bad word of mouth. Andrew F. Hayes process macros, regression analysis mediation effect, Pearson correlation, Cronbach's alpha reliability test, and other tests were utilized to examine the data.

Table 1 displays Cronbach's Alpha values; instruments are deemed reliable when their values are above 0.7, as per Lewandowski et al. (1987). The table shows that Cronbach's alpha values for moral violation, negative word-of-mouth, deceitful advertising, and brand hate are .816, .776, .823 and .828, correspondingly. The instrument is thus reliable (Morgan et al., 2004).

Table 1: Reliability statistics

Variables	Cronbach's Alpha	No. of Items
Deceptive Advertising	.816	4
Moral violations	.776	4
Brand hate	.823	5
Negative word of mouth	.828	5

Table 2: Correlation matrix

	Deceptive Advertising	Moral violations	Brand hate	Negative word of mouth
Deceptive Advertising	1			
Moral violations	.379**	1		
Brand hate	.321**	.258**	1	
Negative word of mouth	.432**	.397**	.412**	1

Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed),

Table 2 shows that the dependent variable (poor word of mouth) is correlated with the independent variables (moral transgression, deceptive advertising, and brand hatred) with coefficients of 432, 397, and 412, respectively. According to the Pearson correlation values, there is a moderate link between negative word-of-mouth and brand hate, moral violations, and deceptive advertising.

Model summary regression

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Durbin- Watson
1	.536 ^a	.287	.275	.48439	1.884

a. Predictors: (constant) Deceptive Advertising, moral violation, brand hate.

b. Dependent Variable: negative word of mouth.

In the model summary, you can see how well the model fits. As a visual representation of the interdependencies among the variables, the table model summary includes the estimated R. A moderate correlation (R=.536) was found between the independent factors and negative word of mouth. The R-squared value represents how much negative word-of-mouth, the dependent variable, varies. The results showed that negative word-of-mouth, the dependent variable,

changed by 28% due to the independent variables, and the population's adjusted R-squared value was 27%. The 48% standard error is due to various variables.

Multiple regression analysis - Model summary (H1)

Model	unstandardized		Standardized	t	sig.	Collinearity Statistics	
	B	Std. Error				Tolerance	VIF
(Constant)	1.467	.281		5.226	.000		
DA	.212	.074	.224	2.842	.005	.616	1.624
Moral violations	.098	.068	.108	1.446	.840	.690	1.450
Brand hate	.317	.074	.315	4.303	.000	.714	1.400

Dependent Variable: Negative word of mouth, DA= Deceptive Advertising.

A shift in the independent variable will cause a change in the dependent variable, according to the beta value in the unstandardized coefficient found in the coefficient table. When dishonest advertising rises by one unit, negative word-of-mouth rises by 212 units, and when moral transgressions increase by one unit, negative word-of-mouth shifts by 098 units. There will be a 0.317 unit shift in negative word of mouth for every one-unit increase in brand hatred. In the coefficient table, the "t" value shows the degree of correlation between the two variables. This table shows a strong association between misleading advertising and negative word of mouth, as shown by the t value of 2.842.

Furthermore, the P value is .005, which is significant because it is less than .05. Consequently, hypothesis H1 is accepted. The data support this hypothesis, which states that misleading advertising is highly correlated with negative word of mouth. It means that word got out when consumers had negative experiences with a business's products or services. The literature research also backs this finding. When people buy products expecting to fix their problems, yet the products don't work as advertised, the customers feel let down. When unhappy, consumers often vent their frustrations by spreading rumours about the company. Claiming the company failed to supply them with a practical solution that could solve their problems, dissatisfied customers go on to tell others about their negative experiences. This negative word of mouth will have a lasting impact on the company (Kim, Wang, Maslowska, & Malthouse, 2016). The "t" value of morals is 1.446, and the p-value is less than .05 at .840, indicating no significant link between moral breaches and poor word-of-mouth in this study context. As a result, we dismiss H2. According to the research, there are many different types of customers. When dealing with businesses, some clients are primarily concerned with the products and services they receive. According to Woods, Rodgers, Towers, and La Grow (2015), these consumers are unconcerned about a company's moral and ethical standards. With the rejection of H2, there is no mediation and no meaningful association between immoral actions and negative word of mouth. We also reject H4, which states that brand hatred mediates the association between moral infractions and unfavorable word of mouth since the requirement of path 1 is minimal for mediation. The unstandardized beta value for brand hatred is 0.317, which indicates that negative word-of-mouth increased by 0.317 for every unit rise in brand hate. We accept H5 because the "t" value is 4.303, which means a strong correlation, and the "p" value is .000, which indicates significance. The research suggests that when consumers develop negative feelings towards a brand, they are more likely to spread negative feedback, which hurts the company's image. Dissatisfied consumers will inevitably vent their frustrations about a brand online (Kucuk, 2018).

Mediation Analysis

Y: NWM, X: DA,M: BH

Sample: Size: 150

Outcome Variable: BH

Table 5**Model Summary**

R	R-sq	MSE	F	df1	df2	p
.4340	.1180	2.2247	2.7081	1.0000	148.0000	.0020

Model

coeff	se	t	p	LLCI	ULCI	
constant	1.9296	1.3834	2.3948	.0052	.8042	4.6634
DA	.5783	.3514	2.6456	.0020	.1161	1.2727

Table 5 shows the mediating link between unfavorable brand perceptions and misleading advertising. A considerable association between misleading advertising and brand animosity is indicated by the 2.6456 "t" value and the significant p value of .002. So, the second condition for mediation is satisfied.

Outcome Variable: NWM

Table 6**Model Summary**

R	R-sq	MSE	F	df1	df2	p
.4819	.2322	.0830	22.2321	2.0000	147.0000	.0000

Model

coeff	se	t	p	LLCI	ULCI	
constant	2.7263	.2690	10.1354	.0000	2.1947	3.2579
DA	.3856	.0685	5.6290	.0000	.2502	.5209
BH	.0682	.0159	4.2970	.0000	.0996	.0369

Table 6 displays the mediating link between negative word-of-mouth and brand hatred. There is a strong association between bad word-of-mouth and brand hatred, as shown by the "t" value of 4.2970. The final criterion for mediation is met because the P value is significant (.0000). Furthermore, the LLCI is .0996, and the ULCI is .0369, both showing that the ranges for the upper and lower bounds are positive. As a result, brand animosity mediates the connection between misleading advertising and constructive criticism. Therefore, we accept hypothesis H3.

Table 7**Direct effect of X on Y**

Effect	se	t	p	LLCI	ULCI
.3856	.0685	2.842	.005	.2502	.5209

Table 8

Indirect effect(s) of X on Y:

Effect	BootSE	BootLLCI	BootULCI
BH	.0395	.0217	.0873

Tables 7 and 8 show the direct and indirect consequences. The direct effect of misleading advertising is 0.3856%, according to Table 7, while the indirect impact is 0.0395%, according to Table 8, when considering the context of brand animosity. It proves that brand hatred mediates between misleading advertising and negative word of mouth. Research shows that when consumers encounter products that don't meet their expectations, they get upset, avoid the company altogether, and spread negative word of mouth about them (Gensler et al., 2015).

Conclusion

Looking at the results of the primary data collected from surveys makes it clear that deceptive advertising encourages customers to share negative reviews about a business. People buy products and services thinking they will solve their problems right now but end up dissatisfied if they don't. Customers are less inclined to make repeat purchases from an unhappy business. From the consumer's point of view, it's evident that when consumers have a negative experience with a brand, they are more prone to spread damaging rumours. Pakistani consumers are more interested in clothing brands that provide reasonably priced, high-quality goods. Customers care more about a company's product quality than its corporate social responsibility or ethics. Thus, they don't give a hoot about immoral actions. Since this is the case, Pakistani consumers will not slander companies that act unethically. In addition, customers are oblivious to companies' immoral actions since no organized system shows what companies are doing and how they are managing their businesses. According to research, brand hatred mediates the link between misleading advertising and negative word of mouth. People tend to vent about bad things that have happened to them. Companies have the same problem: dissatisfied customers will tell others about their negative experiences with a brand that doesn't care about them, which will cause the brand's reputation to be nosedive. Hence, brands in Pakistani society should remember that customer satisfaction is key to success by ensuring customers continue with them.

Limitations

University students from Islamabad and central Punjab in Pakistan collected data for this study. So, we can't say anything about the entire country based on these results. This study is cross-sectional in design. Longitudinal studies are hot right now. Although collecting data over several periods is essential for longitudinal studies, the variables under investigation were not amenable to a longitudinal analysis due to time limitations. The results may not apply to other cultures because this study was conducted in Pakistan.

Suggestions for Future Research

Possible future research avenues include expanding upon the role of mediation between the independent and dependent variables, as was done in the current study. You should examine the moderator's function for the dependent and independent variables. Additional components should be incorporated into the study to enhance the overall image. Islamabad and central Punjab are the only places where this idea has been tested with university students. Further studies including college students or more provinces could be considered to expand the area of knowledge. This

investigation rests on a cross-sectional research design. It is recommended that longitudinal research be conducted to test the present model. It will help us understand it better and get better results.

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