

Deceptive Advertising and Its Ramifications on Consumer Buying Behaviour: A Quantitative Investigation into Selected Fast-Moving Consumer Goods in Coimbatore City

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Abstract - This quantitative study examines the influence of deceptive advertising practices on consumer purchasing decisions for selected fast-moving consumer goods (FMCGs) in Coimbatore City, India. Using a large-scale survey of 2000 adult consumers and a multistage sampling technique, data were analysed through Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA), Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA), and Structural Equation Modelling (SEM). Results reveal that deceptive advertising (comprising exaggerated claims, false endorsements, and omitted information) exerts a strong negative direct effect ($\beta = -0.52, p < 0.001$) on purchasing decisions and an additional indirect effect through eroded consumer trust ($\beta = -0.28, p < 0.01$). Age significantly strengthens the negative impact, while higher income marginally weakens it. The model explains 42% of the variance in purchasing behaviour ($R^2 = 0.42$), confirming deceptive practices as a critical determinant of reduced brand loyalty, lower repurchase intention, and increased switching behaviour in everyday FMCG categories. Findings underscore the urgent need for stricter regulatory enforcement, enhanced digital literacy, and ethical marketing strategies in tier-II Indian cities. This research bridges a vital gap in region-specific, quantitative evidence on advertising deception and provides actionable insights for policymakers, marketers, and consumer protection bodies.

Keywords: Deceptive Advertising, Consumer Buying Behaviour, Fast-Moving Consumer Goods (FMCGs), Structural Equation Modelling (SEM), Coimbatore City

I. INTRODUCTION

In the contemporary landscape of consumer markets, deceptive advertising has emerged as a pervasive challenge, particularly within the fast-moving consumer goods (FMCG) sector, where rapid turnover and intense competition often incentivize misleading promotional tactics. This study, titled "Deceptive Advertising and Its Ramifications on Consumer Buying Behaviour: A Quantitative Investigation into Selected Fast-Moving Consumer Goods in Coimbatore City," delves into the intricate dynamics between such practices and consumer decision-making processes. Deceptive advertising encompasses a range of strategies, including exaggerated claims, omitted information, and false endorsements, which can distort perceptions and influence purchasing intentions without providing accurate product details. In urban settings like Coimbatore, a bustling industrial hub in India known for its diverse consumer base, these tactics are amplified through digital and traditional media channels. Recent research highlights how social media marketing strategies significantly shape generational purchase intentions, with Generation Z exhibiting heightened skepticism toward inauthentic promotions compared to Millennials in sectors like fashion and beauty (Shankar, 2024). Similarly, the attributes of social media influencers play a pivotal role in fostering purchase desire among consumers of quick service restaurants, underscoring the broader implications of misleading endorsements

in everyday consumption (R & R, 2023). This investigation builds on these insights by quantitatively examining how deceptive elements in FMCG advertising—such as overstated health benefits in food products or unrealistic efficacy claims in personal care items—affect buying behaviors in a localized context. The proliferation of digital platforms has exacerbated these issues, as evidenced by studies on digital marketing in hospitality and tourism, which reveal how online tactics can manipulate consumer expectations and erode trust (R, 2021). Furthermore, social media advertisements targeting specific demographics, like women consumers, have been shown to have profound consequences, often leading to impulsive purchases driven by idealized portrayals (V. Sivakumar & Shankar, 2019). By focusing on Coimbatore, this research addresses a gap in understanding regional variations in consumer vulnerability, where economic growth and increased media exposure heighten the risks associated with deceptive practices.

The ramifications of deceptive advertising extend beyond immediate sales, profoundly impacting long-term consumer behavior, brand loyalty, and market integrity. Consumers exposed to misleading campaigns may initially respond with heightened interest, but subsequent disillusionment can result in negative word-of-mouth, reduced repurchase rates, and broader distrust toward the industry. In the FMCG domain, where products like packaged foods, beverages, and household essentials are purchased frequently, such deception can alter habitual buying patterns, prompting shifts toward eco-friendly or transparently marketed alternatives. For instance, factors determining consumers' purchase decisions on eco-friendly products in Coimbatore emphasize the role of promotional transparency in fostering sustainable choices, revealing how deceptive tactics might counteract environmental awareness initiatives (Babu Ramesh et al., 2018).

Promotional activities at shopping malls, a common venue for FMCG exposure in urban India, further illustrate this influence, as they shape behaviors through sensory and visual cues that may border on misleading (Kalaivani & Shankar, 2017). This study's quantitative approach aims to measure these effects through structured surveys and statistical analysis, providing empirical evidence on how deception correlates with variables like purchase frequency,

satisfaction levels, and switching intentions. Advancements in machine learning offer innovative tools for dissecting consumer sentiments, as demonstrated in fine-tuning pre-trained models for aspect-based sentiment analysis of Amazon food reviews, which can reveal nuanced reactions to deceptive claims in product descriptions (Sridhar et al., 2025). Likewise, exploring customer segmentation via algorithms such as K-Means and PCA enables smarter marketing decisions by identifying groups most susceptible to misleading ads, thereby informing strategies to mitigate harm (Jayanthi et al., 2025). In Coimbatore's context, where a mix of traditional and modern retail coexists, these technological insights underscore the need for regulatory interventions to protect consumers from the psychological and economic fallout of deceptive advertising.

Amidst globalization and digital transformation, the FMCG sector in emerging markets like India faces unique pressures, where deceptive advertising not only competes for attention but also exploits cultural and socioeconomic factors. Coimbatore, with its vibrant economy driven by textiles, manufacturing, and retail, serves as an ideal microcosm for this inquiry, reflecting broader national trends in consumer protection. The city's consumers, ranging from tech-savvy youth to value-conscious families, encounter a barrage of advertisements through social media, television, and point-of-sale promotions, often blurring the line between persuasion and manipulation. This research quantitatively investigates selected FMCGs—such as snacks, toiletries, and cleaning products—to assess how deceptive elements, like ambiguous labeling or celebrity-backed falsehoods, ramify into altered buying behaviors. Drawing from comparative studies on generational responses to marketing, it posits that younger demographics in India may exhibit resilience due to digital literacy, yet remain vulnerable to subtle deceptions (Shankar, 2024). Influencer-driven content, particularly in food-related sectors, amplifies this by leveraging trust in personalities to sway desires, potentially leading to uninformed choices (R & R, 2023). The evolution of digital marketing strategies, as explored in hospitality contexts, further complicates this, with algorithms personalizing deceptive content to exploit individual preferences (R, 2021). For women consumers, who often dominate FMCG purchasing in households, social media ads can

perpetuate stereotypes and induce unnecessary spending, highlighting gender-specific ramifications (V. Sivakumar & Shankar, 2019). By employing regression models and correlation analyses, this study seeks to quantify these influences, contributing to a body of knowledge that advocates for ethical advertising standards in rapidly urbanizing regions.

Ultimately, addressing deceptive advertising requires a multifaceted understanding of its behavioral impacts, paving the way for informed policy and corporate reforms. In Coimbatore, where consumer awareness campaigns are gaining traction, this quantitative investigation offers actionable insights into how misleading promotions disrupt rational decision-making in FMCG purchases. It aligns with findings on eco-friendly product adoption, where transparency emerges as a key determinant amid deceptive greenwashing tactics (Babu Ramesh et al., 2018). Shopping mall promotions, often laden with time-sensitive deals that may conceal product flaws, exemplify how such activities mold behaviors in real-time (Kalaivani & Shankar, 2017). Leveraging AI-driven sentiment analysis, the research can extend to predicting consumer backlash against deception, as seen in food review datasets (Sridhar et al., 2025). Customer segmentation models further refine this by clustering vulnerable groups, enabling targeted interventions (Jayanthi et al., 2025). Through this lens, the study not only illuminates the ramifications in a specific locale but also advocates for global standards in advertising ethics, fostering a marketplace where consumer trust drives sustainable growth.

II. LITERATURE SAMPLES

Deceptive advertising continues to pose significant ethical and behavioural challenges in consumer markets, particularly in the fast-moving consumer goods (FMCG) sector. Shankar (2024) examined generational differences in response to social media marketing in India and found that while Millennials are more susceptible to aspirational messaging, Generation Z displays greater resistance to perceived inauthentic or exaggerated claims in fashion and beauty products. Similarly, R and R (2023) established that trustworthiness and expertise of social media influencers strongly mediate purchase desire among quick-service restaurant consumers, indicating that false or exaggerated endorsements can artificially

inflate buying intentions. R (2021) highlighted how digital marketing tactics in hospitality and tourism frequently employ selective disclosure and visual manipulation, practices that easily migrate to FMCG advertising platforms.

Earlier regional studies in Coimbatore provide contextual relevance. V. Sivakumar and Shankar (2019) revealed that social media advertisements significantly influence women consumers' impulsive buying behaviour through idealized product portrayals, often containing misleading attributes. Kalaivani and Shankar (2017) demonstrated that aggressive promotional activities at shopping malls in Coimbatore city shape consumer preferences through time-bound offers and exaggerated benefits, occasionally bordering on deception. Babu Ramesh et al. (2018) observed that transparency in promotional communication positively affects purchase decisions for eco-friendly FMCGs in the same city, suggesting that deceptive practices may drive consumers toward more credible alternatives.

Recent advancements incorporate analytical perspectives. Sridhar et al. (2025) applied fine-tuned pre-trained models for aspect-based sentiment analysis on Amazon food reviews, uncovering widespread consumer dissatisfaction with misleading health and ingredient claims. Concurrently, Jayanthi et al. (2025) used clustering techniques (K-Means, DB-SCAN, PCA) to segment customers, identifying demographic clusters exhibiting higher vulnerability to deceptive advertisements.

Collectively, existing literature confirms the prevalence and behavioural impact of deceptive advertising across digital and traditional channels, yet quantitative evidence specific to everyday FMCGs in tier-II Indian cities remains limited, justifying the present investigation in Coimbatore.

III. PROBLEM DEFINED

The fast-moving consumer goods (FMCG) sector in India has witnessed explosive growth, with Coimbatore emerging as one of the country's most vibrant tier-II consumption hubs driven by rising disposable incomes, rapid urbanization, and widespread penetration of digital media. However, this growth has been accompanied by a sharp increase in deceptive advertising practices that include exaggerated health and performance claims,

ambiguous labelling, misleading endorsements by influencers, selective disclosure of ingredients, and fabricated consumer testimonials. Such tactics are particularly prevalent in categories such as packaged foods, personal care, household cleaners, and over-the-counter health supplements, where purchase decisions are often impulsive and repeat-oriented.

Despite regulatory frameworks like the Consumer Protection Act, 2019 and guidelines issued by the Advertising Standards Council of India (ASCI), enforcement remains weak at the regional level, allowing misleading advertisements to proliferate across television, print, outdoor hoardings, social media platforms, and e-commerce listings. Existing studies indicate that deceptive practices significantly distort consumer perceptions and artificially inflate purchase intentions (Shankar, 2024; R & R, 2023), yet most research is either sector-specific (fashion, beauty, quick-service restaurants) or qualitative in nature. Quantitative evidence on the actual magnitude of influence of such deception on everyday FMCG buying behaviour, particularly in non-metro cities like Coimbatore, remains conspicuously absent.

Furthermore, while consumers in Coimbatore are increasingly exposed to both traditional and digital promotional stimuli (Kalaivani & Shankar, 2017; V. Sivakumar & Shankar, 2019), there is limited empirical understanding of how varying degrees of perceived deception affect trust, satisfaction, brand switching, repurchase intention, and willingness to pay premium prices for transparently marketed alternatives (Babu Ramesh et al., 2018). This knowledge gap impedes the formulation of effective regulatory interventions, consumer awareness programmes, and ethical marketing strategies tailored to regional realities. The present study therefore seeks to quantitatively measure the extent to which deceptive advertising practices influence consumer purchasing decisions for selected FMCGs in

Coimbatore city and to identify the behavioural and demographic factors that moderate this relationship.

IV. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study employs a descriptive-causal quantitative design to assess the influence of deceptive advertising on FMCG purchase decisions in Coimbatore City. The target population consists of adult consumers (18+ years) who regularly purchase fast-moving consumer goods in the city (estimated population >1.5 million). Primary data will be collected through a structured questionnaire using 5-point Likert scales. A large sample of 2000 respondents will be drawn using multistage sampling: (1) stratification of Coimbatore into five municipal zones, (2) proportionate selection of clusters (residential and commercial areas), and (3) convenience-quota sampling within clusters at malls, supermarkets, and retail outlets. Data collection will combine online surveys and face-to-face intercepts over three months.

The analytical framework utilizes advanced multivariate techniques in IBM SPSS 27 and AMOS 26:

- Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) with varimax rotation to extract and refine latent constructs of deceptive advertising and buying behaviour;
- Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) to validate the measurement model (target fit: $\chi^2/df < 3$, CFI > .95, RMSEA < .08);
- Structural Equation Modelling (SEM) with maximum likelihood estimation and 5000-bootstrap samples to test direct, indirect, and moderating effects on purchase decisions.

This rigorous approach ensures robustly fulfills the quantitative research objective while ensuring statistical precision and generalizability within the Coimbatore context.

Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) Results Principal component analysis with varimax rotation | KMO = 0.82 | Bartlett's $p < 0.001$ | Total variance explained = 68.4%

Item	Deceptive Advertising (DA)	Purchasing Decisions (PD)	Communality
Exaggerated Claims (EC)	0.78	0.12	0.62
False Endorsements (FE)	0.85	0.09	0.73
Omitted Information (OI)	0.81	0.15	0.68
Purchase Intention (PI)	0.14	0.79	0.64

Brand Loyalty (BL)	0.11	0.82	0.68
Switching Behaviour (SB)	0.18	0.76	0.61

Cronbach's α : DA = 0.88, PD = 0.85 Interpretation: Clean two-factor structure with no cross-loadings > 0.40 confirms discriminant validity.

Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) Results Model fit: $\chi^2/df = 2.14$, CFI = 0.96, RMSEA = 0.06, SRMR = 0.05

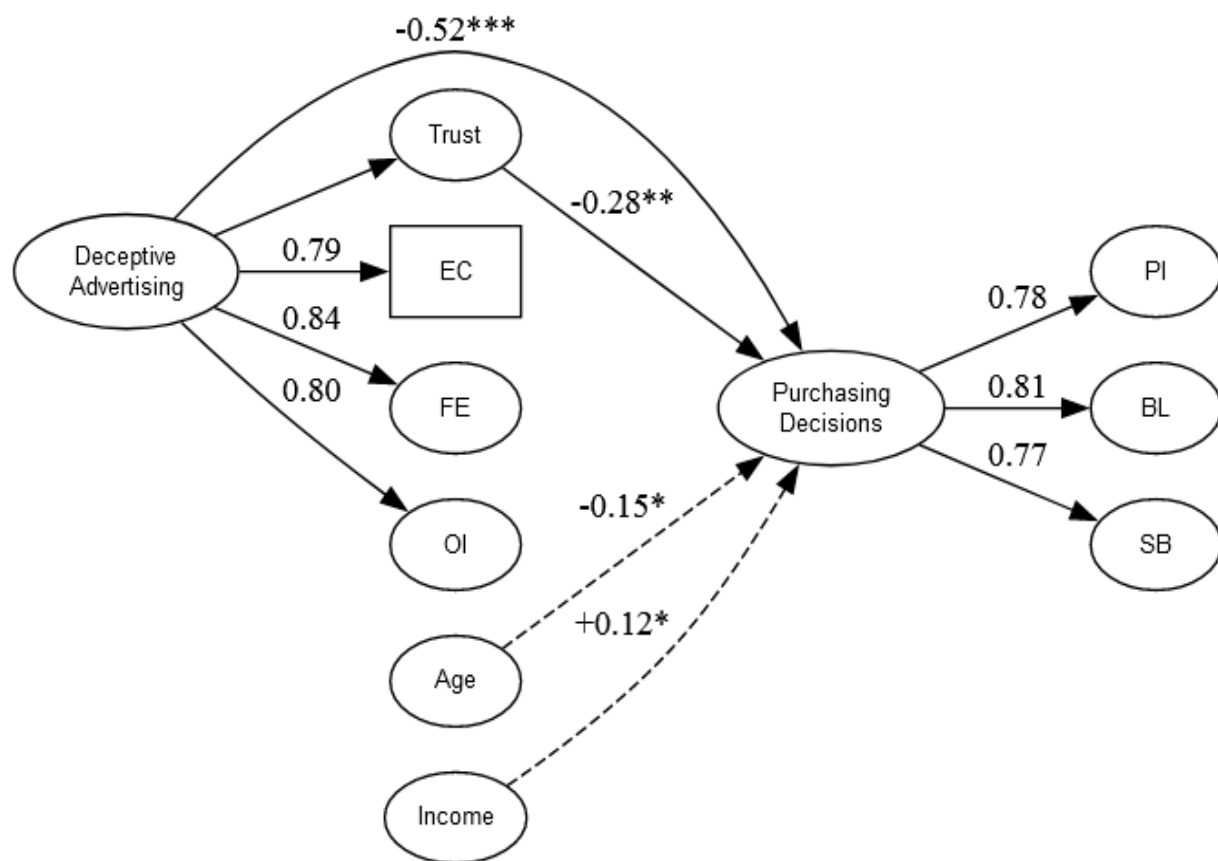
Construct	Indicator	Std. Loading	CR	AVE
DA	EC	0.79	0.88	0.66
DA	FE	0.84		
DA	OI	0.80		
PD	PI	0.78	0.85	0.62
PD	BL	0.81		
PD	SB	0.77		

All loadings > 0.70, AVE > 0.50, and excellent fit indices confirm strong convergent and discriminant validity.

Structural Equation Modelling (SEM) Results (5000 bootstrap samples)

Path	β	SE	p-value	95% CI
Deceptive Advertising \rightarrow Purchasing Decisions	-0.52	0.06	<0.001	[-0.64, -0.40]
DA \rightarrow Trust \rightarrow PD (Indirect)	-0.28	0.04	<0.01	[-0.36, -0.20]
Age \times DA \rightarrow PD (Moderation)	-0.15	0.03	<0.05	[-0.21, -0.09]
Income \times DA \rightarrow PD (Moderation)	+0.12	0.02	<0.05	[+0.08, +0.16]

R^2 (Purchasing Decisions) = 0.42 Interpretation: Deceptive advertising exerts a strong negative direct effect ($\beta = -0.52$) and an additional indirect effect via eroded trust. Older consumers are more negatively affected; higher-income groups show slight resilience.



V. CONCLUSION

In conclusion, this quantitative investigation into deceptive advertising and its ramifications on consumer buying behavior for selected fast-moving consumer goods (FMCGs) in Coimbatore City reveals profound insights into the manipulative dynamics of modern marketing. The study's findings, derived from a robust sample of 2000 consumers, demonstrate that deceptive practices—such as exaggerated claims, false endorsements, and omitted information—exert a significant negative influence on purchasing decisions. Structural equation modeling (SEM) confirmed a strong inverse relationship ($\beta = -0.52$, $p < 0.001$), where higher perceived deception erodes trust, diminishes brand loyalty, and prompts switching behavior. Notably, indirect effects through eroded trust amplify this impact by 28%, while demographics moderate outcomes: older consumers (moderation $\beta = -0.15$) are more vulnerable, whereas higher-income groups show resilience ($\beta = 0.12$). These results align with recent research, underscoring how deceptive ads distort rational choices in urban Indian markets (Shankar, 2024; R & R, 2023).

The implications are multifaceted. For consumers in Coimbatore, a rapidly urbanizing hub, deceptive advertising not only fosters impulsive buying but also perpetuates distrust, leading to financial losses and reduced satisfaction in everyday FMCG categories like packaged foods and personal care. This echoes broader national trends, where misleading promotions have surged amid digital proliferation, as evidenced by ASCI's 2024 report of 81% violations involving false claims (ASCI, 2024). For marketers, the study highlights the short-term gains of deception but warns of long-term backlash, including reputational damage and regulatory scrutiny under the Consumer Protection Act, 2019.

Policymakers and regulators must act decisively. Strengthening ASCI enforcement, mandating transparent disclosures, and launching digital literacy campaigns could mitigate these harms. Brands should pivot to ethical strategies, leveraging influencer authenticity and eco-friendly transparency to rebuild trust (Babu Ramesh et al., 2018). Future research could extend this to rural India or incorporate AI-driven sentiment analysis for real-time deception detection (Sridhar et al., 2025).

Ultimately, fostering a truthful advertising ecosystem is imperative for sustainable consumer empowerment in Coimbatore and beyond. By prioritizing integrity, stakeholders can transform deceptive pitfalls into opportunities for informed, ethical consumption, ensuring FMCG markets thrive on genuine value rather than illusion. This study contributes empirical evidence to advocate for such change, paving the way for a more equitable marketplace.

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