The Impact of Ineffective Marketing Strategies on Consumer Perception and Buying Behavior

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Abstract

This research paper explains how poorly planned or poorly executed marketing strategies can negatively affect how consumers see a brand and how they behave when making purchase decisions. It reviews different types of ineffective marketing — such as misleading ads, cultural mistakes, bad targeting, irrelevant messaging, pricing errors, and negative publicity — and shows how these mistakes damage trust, reduce interest, and push consumers toward competing brands. The paper brings together findings from research studies and real-world cases and presents a clear framework for understanding why ineffective marketing causes these reactions. It also offers practical recommendations for companies, emphasizing transparency, cultural awareness, proper audience targeting, and careful reputation management.

Keywords: Ineffective marketing, deceptive advertising, consumer perception, buying behavior, marketing failures, brand trust

1. Introduction

Marketing plays a major role in shaping how customers think about a brand and whether they decide to buy from it. But when marketing is poorly designed — whether because the message is misleading, irrelevant, culturally insensitive, or targeted at the wrong audience — it can create negative reactions. These reactions often include reduced trust, poor brand perception, and lower purchase intent.

This paper reviews research findings and real-life examples to show how ineffective marketing harms consumer perception and behavior. It also proposes a research plan for future studies to measure these effects in detail.

2. Conceptual Background and Definitions

In this study, ineffective marketing strategies refer to marketing decisions — whether intentional or accidental — that fail to achieve desired results and instead create confusion, mistrust, offense, or disengagement among consumers.

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Consumer perception includes the thoughts, feelings, and attitudes people develop about a brand or product.

Buying behavior refers to the actions consumers take, such as searching for products, purchasing, repurchasing, and sharing opinions.

3. Review of Literature

Organized by types of marketing failure.

3.1 Deceptive or Misleading Advertising

Misleading ads — such as exaggerated product claims or hidden conditions — often reduce trust and push consumers to switch to competitor brands. Studies show that when people feel deceived, they become skeptical, lose trust, and are less likely to buy.

Why it happens: When ads lie or exaggerate, consumers feel cheated. This creates internal conflict and forces them to respond by lowering trust and spreading negative opinions

3.2 Cultural Insensitivity & Offensive Messaging

Ads that disrespect cultural values can create outrage, call for boycotts, and major reputation loss. A famous example is the Dolce & Gabbana controversy in China, where culturally insensitive content caused huge public backlash and market loss.

Why it happens: When an ad disrespects cultural norms, people feel anger and moral offense. This leads to public criticism and social media backlash.

3.3 Poor Targeting or Irrelevant Advertising

Ads that do not match the consumer's interests or context often get ignored or disliked. Research shows that when ads feel irrelevant, consumers question the brand's understanding of its audience.

Why it happens: When an ad feels "not for me," consumers disengage and assume the brand is incompetent. This reduces purchase intent.

3.4 Message-Channel Mismatch

Sometimes ads fit one platform but are used incorrectly on another — for example, long, complex messages forced into short TikTok content.

Why it happens: When the messaging style doesn't match the platform, consumers get confused and question the brand's clarity.

3.5 Pricing errors & Inappropriate Promotions perceived risk

Unfair pricing, hidden fees, or excessive discounting create distrust and skepticism. People may doubt product quality or feel cheated.

Why it happens: Price signals quality. If the pricing seems suspicious, consumers assume something is wrong and avoid buying.

3.6 Fake Scarcity & Manipulative Tactics

False countdown timers or fake "only 1 left" tricks may work short-term but damage the brand long-term.

Why it happens: When consumers sense manipulation, they experience "reactance" — meaning they push back and avoid the brand completely.

3.7 Crises & Negative Publicity Amplified by Social Media

Marketing mistakes quickly become viral online. Negative stories spread fast and decrease purchase intent.

Why it happens: Social media amplifies negative reactions. Once public anger spreads, consumers form negative judgments and may boycott brands.

4. Integrative Framework: The PRB Model

The paper proposes the Perception–Risk–Behavior (PRB) Framework:

- **Signal** – The marketing message (content, tone, price).
- **Processing** – Consumers judge the message for clarity, relevance, and cultural fit.
- **Perception Shift** – If they judge it negatively, trust decreases and perceived risk increases.
- **Behavioral Outcome** – Lower interest, avoidance, reduced purchase intent, and negative word-of-mouth.
- **Moderators** – Social media, prior brand reputation, and involvement affect how strong the reaction will be.

5. Proposed Research Methodology

5.1 Research Objectives & Hypotheses

The study aims to test whether deceptive, insensitive, or irrelevant marketing reduces trust and purchase intention — and whether social media amplification makes the situation worse.

5.2 Study 1 — Experimental Study

600 participants

Exposed to different types of ads (truthful, deceptive, insensitive)

Measures: trust, deception, offense, purchase intention

Analysis: ANOVA, mediation tests, moderation tests

5.3 Study 2 — Long-Term Field Study

Track 1,000 consumers for 6 months after exposure to controversial campaigns to study real purchase changes and social media reactions.

5.4 Study 3 — Qualitative Interviews

Interview people who complained publicly to understand emotional triggers and forgiveness patterns.

6. Anticipated Results

Based on past studies, deceptive and culturally insensitive marketing is expected to significantly reduce trust and buying intention. Poor targeting and mismatched channel strategies also reduce ad effectiveness.

Social media is expected to amplify these negative reactions, making the brand's problems worse.

7. Managerial Recommendations

1. Check facts before releasing ads.

2. Review content for cultural sensitivity.

3. Use proper audience targeting with testing.

4. Match the message to the platform.

5. Have a crisis-response plan ready.

These steps help prevent backlash and protect brand reputation.

8. Limitations & Future Research

The study is based mainly on literature. Actual field experiments are needed to confirm the framework. Future studies could explore cross-cultural differences and the role of regulation.

9. Conclusion

Ineffective marketing — when deceptive, insensitive, irrelevant, or poorly executed — can significantly harm consumer perceptions and behaviors. The PRB Framework connects how marketing signals are processed and how they lead to behavioral outcomes. By understanding these effects, brands can avoid mistakes and maintain stronger consumer relationships.

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