

Understanding Post-Sale Dynamics: The Role of Consumer Expectations and Attitudes Toward Marketing

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Abstract—This study aims to examine the common post-sale deception in the context of Iraq. The study used a quantitative approach to collect the data from two supermarkets located in Erbil. The data was collected using questionnaires from 209 customers and the data analyzed by Smart-PLS. The results indicated that post-sales impacted significantly by Consumer expectations of the product and Consumer attitudes towards marketing. when the marketing is honest and accurate, it will lead to an increase in engagement and customer trust. The study discussed practical insights for managers and businesses to conforming consumer expectations.

Keywords—Post-Sale, Post-purchase, Deception marketing, Consumer attitudes.

I. INTRODUCTION

Deceptive marketing and unethical business tactics help us to understand about false claims or fake news spread by rival companies regarding a firm's products (Song et al., 2019). Differentiating between deception and lying is important; lying refers to the intentional act of conveying misleading information to the recipient, whereas deception does not always require making false or incorrect remarks (Wilkins et al., 2016). Academic studies have devoted less focus to the repercussions of deceptive marketing, for both the companies engaging in such practices and the consumers being deceived, compared to the emphasis given to the impacts of good marketing activities (Alqaysi & Zahari, 2022; Massoudi & fatah, 2024; Welch & Galvan, 2024). The present-day business environment requires companies to spend a substantial amount of money to attain loyal customers by influencing their feelings, knowledge and purchasing behavior. Deceptive marketing can have significant consequences on consumers, including: Deceptive marketing can cause consumers to purchase products or services that do not meet their expectations, resulting in wasted money and potentially even financial harm. Also, misleading advertising can lead consumers to believe that a product is safe or healthy, when in reality it may be harmful or dangerous. This can result in serious health or safety risks for consumers who rely on the

product. When consumers are deceived by marketing, they may lose trust in the company or brand that advertised the product (Welch & Galvan, 2024). This can lead to a loss of repeat business and negative word-of-mouth advertising. In addition, deceptive marketing can also have a psychological impact on consumers, causing them to feel disappointed, frustrated, or even angry about their purchase.

Overall, deceptive marketing can have serious consequences for consumers, both in terms of their financial well-being and their physical and mental health. It is important for companies to be honest and transparent in their advertising practices to avoid these negative outcomes. Deceptive marketing practices have negative influence on the relationship between businesses and consumers. Any business involves in deceptive marketing it isn't a trustworthy business since the new and existing customers may switch to another product or services (Al Delawi, 2019; Qader et al, 2025). As a result, engaging in deceptive practices can result in a negative reputation for the company, leading to a decline in future business. Furthermore, such practices can harm the brand image and reputation of any firm that employs them (Wilkins et al., 2016). Also, the effects of deceptive marketing on consumers are perhaps the worst aspect about marketing and advertising. The consumer ends up making uninformed decisions. If the firm doesn't tell their customers the truth or paint a picture for them with firm's ad that overshadows or contradicts the truth about the product or service, then they will make poor decisions concerning those products and services (Alqaysi & Zahari, 2022; Zaidan et al, 2024).

After-sales services possess the potential to provide significant advantages to both purchasers and vendors, contingent upon their existence and quality level.

The purpose of this study is to find the unethical activities in the market that may used in business post-sale and concentrate to deception strategy, which can lead to reduced consumer trust and loyalty.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW AND HYPOTHESES DEVELOPMENT

A. *Deception Marketing*

Deception must be differentiated from lying; a liar constitutes a purposeful falsehood conveyed to the recipient, but deception does not always entail erroneous or inaccurate assertions. Alqaysi and Zahari, (2022) asserts that the research has only examined individual facets of deceptive marketing, resulting in a pluralistic perspective on deception in marketing. Academics have contested the potential inaccuracies of marketing. Academics have contended whether advertising that may lead to erroneous perceptions should be classified as deceptive or merely misleading.

Russo et al. (1981) like the word "misleading," as it encompasses both the effects instigated by the sender and the perceptions of the recipient, which may not be directly impacted by the sender. Conversely, misleading techniques are confined only to the deliberate manipulations of the sender. Darke and Ritchie (2007) discovered that misleading commercials engender an unfavorable opinion of advertisements and marketing techniques overall, irrespective of the firm or product category. Consequently, misleading tactics might diminish the future efficacy of commercials or marketing strategies overall. Darke and Ritchie (2007) contend that customer deception is detrimental, since it might adversely affect their beliefs and behaviors. Researchers have diligently pursued the formulation of effective metrics for deception and consumer perceptions of it.

Russo (1976) delineates methodologies for assessing the deceptive nature of ads. He builds upon the study of Jacoby and Small (1975), which focused on the issue of recognizing deceptive medication marketing. Subsequently, Russo et al. (1981) devised a technique to detect deceptive advertising through the assessment of customer perceptions. Armstrong et al. (1979) established a framework for assessing deception measuring approaches and utilized it in the analysis of current empirical research. Johar (1995) expands the investigation of misleading ads by examining the role of moderators in the formation of erroneous inferences from such commercials. Recently, academics have focused on the use of deception on the Internet (Welch & Galvan, 2024; Birdawod, 2022).

B. *Post sales (after-sales)*

The phrase "after-sales services" predominantly refers to services rendered to customers following the delivery of items (Massoudi & Fatah, 2024). An additional critical method of demonstrating that the customer's happiness is a priority is the post-sale service. Post-sale is essential for understanding the company's responsibilities in handling angry customers or difficulties that arise from the purchase, and it also acts as a crucial support post the purchase (Ferraz et al., 2023). The majority of the time, these issues cause the relationship to terminate. empowering the organization to prioritize customer happiness post-sale and to satisfy their expectations effectively. The market is becoming progressively turbulent and is always evolving. There are an increasing number of distinguishing

characteristics that significantly influence customer decisions (Ullah et al., 2023). Quality, punctuality, and exemplary service have evolved into fundamental prerequisites and are no longer seen as distinguishing factors. To achieve a competitive edge, ensure long-term sustainability, and maintain a prominent market position, organizations must use innovative differentiation tactics that set them apart from their competitors (Nasir et al., 2024).

The post-sales service for investments undoubtedly provides a significant benefit, as the factors of loyalty become increasingly important. Nonetheless, in the majority of organizations, these services are underestimated. Inadequate post-sales service coupled with extravagant marketing efforts can be detrimental, since clients may feel misled and unsupported post-purchase (Ferraz et al., 2023).

Recognizing that the customer relationship persists post-sale yields enduring advantages for the connections organizations may forge with their clients. Customers may be surveyed about their satisfaction with the repair, provided with clarity on the necessity of part replacement, and have the chance to ask questions or lodge complaints. It is essential for customers to see that their happiness takes precedence over the transaction (Nasir et al., 2024).

Expectations might be met or dissipated after using the product. The most prevalent theories that attempt to explain people's reactions when their expectations aren't satisfied are those involving assimilation and cognitive dissonance (Font-i-Furnols et al., 2022).

A literature analysis on deception in marketing indicates that misleading packaging is frequently addressed within the context of other subjects. Deceptive packaging entails a calculated effort to deceive consumers about a product's attributes, often its number, using containers intentionally crafted to provide a misleading impression of this characteristic. Naylor's (1962) research comprised providing consumers with both conventional and underfilled packages of potato crisps. Most participants were unaware of the weight discrepancy. Nonetheless, when the weight of the experimental pack diminished, the preference for the standard pack escalated.

C. *Consumer expectations of product*

Modern customers are transforming their social environment through social media, thereby impacting one another's purchasing behavior and expectations (Nash, 2019). Expectations are crucial determinants for the acceptance or rejection of a product, influenced by customers' prior experiences, the information accessible at the time of purchase, and the consuming situation (Font-i-Furnols et al., 2022; Massoudi, 2020; Issanchou, 1996).

The sensory attributes of the product are crucial during consumption. Nonetheless, expectations can influence product perception (Issanchou, 1996). Upon consuming the goods, expectations may or may not be fulfilled. Several theories, including assimilation and cognitive dissonance theory, may elucidate the individual's response to unmet expectations (Meena & Kumar, 2022).

According to research by Steyn et al. (2010), variables including consumer behavior, brand loyalty, attitude, and cultural impact can cause regional differences in what customers anticipate from a company's products and services. In the current work, expectations denote customer beliefs on a product before its acquisition. Massoudi & Birdawod (2023) presented an empirical study about the interconnections among customer expectations, satisfaction, and loyalty and reported expectations of products able to increase the post-purchase. Spreng and Page (2001) discovered that customers with strong confidence in their expectations utilize both disconfirmation and perceived performance to develop emotions of pleasure, while consumers with low confidence rely solely on perceived performance (Spreng & Page, 2001). Dissonant buyers tend to anticipate less enjoyment from a product, which may result in disappointment with their purchase (Wilkins et al., 2016). It is reasonable to assume that more optimistic customer expectations correlate with an increased likelihood of experiencing elevated post-purchase dissonance (Massoudi et al., 2024).

As companies have grown increasingly cognizant that their long-term success and profitability hinge on customer satisfaction, most successful enterprises have, to some degree, embraced a customer-centric approach. Nonetheless, numerous consumers perceive that companies do not always operate in their best interests, prompting academics to examine consumer satisfaction with businesses overall and their perspectives on corporate marketing techniques (Barksdale & Darden, 1972). The University of Michigan created a consumer mood survey in 1946. Gaski and Etzel (1986) created a questionnaire to assess consumer attitudes and sentiments on marketing in general. Their process includes assessing the public's view of the marketing sector. Understanding consumer perceptions of marketing is essential for marketers to become attuned to the perspectives and attitudes of prospective customers.

Furthermore, it cultivates a favorable marketing image by demonstrating that marketers value their consumers' opinions. However, no study exists that measures customers' sentiments toward businesses' overall marketing strategies and the cognitive dissonance experienced by consumers due to perceived deceit. If customers regard businesses' moral and ethical standards highly, they are more likely to suffer dissonance when disappointed with package fill. Consequently:

H1: Consumer expectations of pack fill are positively related to post sale cognitive dissonance experienced by consumers.

D. Consumer attitudes towards firms' marketing

As companies have grown increasingly cognizant that their long-term success and profitability hinge on customer satisfaction, most successful enterprises have, to varying degrees, embraced a customer-centric approach. Nonetheless, some customers contend that companies do not consistently operate in their best interests; hence, academics have examined consumer contentment with businesses overall, along with their perceptions of corporate marketing strategies (Wilkins et al.,

2016). Understanding consumer perceptions of marketing is beneficial for informing marketers about the perspectives and attitudes of prospective customers. Furthermore, it cultivates a favorable marketing image by demonstrating that marketers value their consumers' opinions. Nonetheless, no study exists that measures customers' sentiments towards businesses' overall marketing strategies and the cognitive dissonance experienced by consumers due to perceived deceit (Alqaysi & Zahari, 2022).

Consumers experiencing reduced dissonance may cultivate brand loyalty and, thus, exhibit a less propensity to change brands (Wilkins et al., 2016). Conversely, customers experiencing dissonance are more inclined to return the goods, transition to an alternative brand (Hunt 1991), and diminish their repurchase intentions (Nazir et al., 2023). Montgomery and Barnes (1993) propose that brand loyalty may result from dissonance experienced at the time of purchasing. Researchers have examined many facets of post-purchase conduct following the occurrence of dissonance. Richins (1983) examined negative word-of-mouth communication and complaint conduct. Subsequently, Richins (1987) expanded her prior exploratory research in three dimensions:

1. the plan to shift the brand because they are unhappy with them
2. attributes of consumers
3. the correlation among the three reactions (undesirable word of mouth, lodging complaints, and brand switching).

H2: Consumers' attitudes toward firms' general marketing practices are positively related to the post sale cognitive dissonance experienced by consumers.

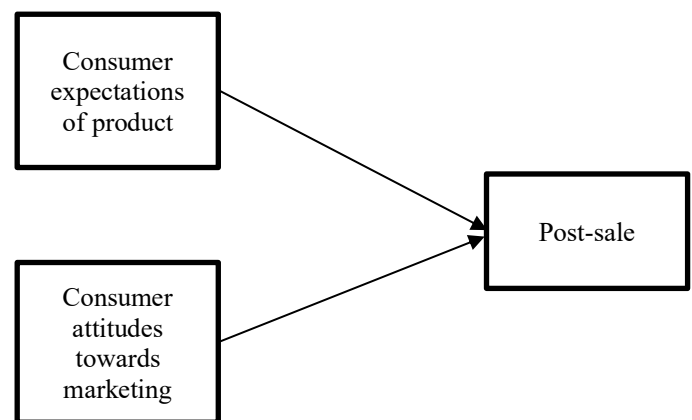


Fig. 1. Conceptual Model

III. METHODOLOGY

The study used the questionnaire as a primary tool to collect the data; the questionnaire was distributed to customers in two supermarkets located in Erbil. However, the questionnaire was distributed in three languages: English, Kurdish, and Arabic. The study used convenience sampling techniques to collect the data from the target population; the reason for choosing the

mentioned techniques is that it is not possible to know the population size of the two supermarkets. The target population of this study is the customers who frequently shop from Carrefour and Majidi supermarkets in Erbil. The authors distributed 300 questionnaires among the customers; this process took two months from 7 September to 2 November 2024, only 227 returned and after checking the missing values and outliers the valid questionnaires were 209.

The research instrument adopted from previous work and the questionnaire have been sent to 6 experts in the field and all the comments and suggestion considered. The number of items and the sources for each factor illustrated in Table 1. The valid data analysed by SPSS for data coding, missing value and outliers and the main analysis analysed by Smart-PLS4.

IV. RESULTS

The first step of data analysis is to find the measurement model result, which consists of loading each item, and the loading values should be 0.7 and above, as recommended by (Hair et al., 2019) based on Table 1 and Figure 1. The loading value of all items above 0.7 except VNP1, CAM5 and PS5 was less than 0.7 and dropped from the model to enhance the validity of the model. The reliability assessed by "Cronbach's Alpha and Composite reliability (CR)" the value of the two mentioned criteria should be 0.7 and above as recommended by (Hair et al., 2019) as shown in Table 1, the value of CR and Cronbach's Alpha above 0.7; thus, no issue in model reliability. The last criterion is to assess the Average Variance Extracted (AVE), and the value should be above 0.5 based on Table 1. The AVE value is above 0.5. Thus, there is no issue with variance.

TABLE I
VALIDITY AND RELIABILITY

Constructs	Code	Loading	CA	CR	AVE	Source
Consumer expectations of product	CAM1	0.882	0.897	0.895	0.682	(Wilkins et al., 2016)
	CAM2	0.868				
	CAM3	0.768				
	CAM4	0.778				
Consumer expectations of product	CEP1	0.799	0.898	0.897	0.637	(Wilkins et al., 2016)
	CEP2	0.761				
	CEP3	0.711				
	CEP4	0.823				
	CEP5	0.886				
Post-sale	PS1	0.856	0.879	0.878	0.642	(Wilkins et al., 2016)
	PS2	0.747				
	PS3	0.824				
	PS4	0.775				

The discriminant validity should be assessed after ensuring there is no issue in the loading of items, CR and AVE. in this study employed two methods to determine the validity of the discriminant, which are:

First - "Heterotrait-monotrait ratio (HTMT)"

Based on the HTMT, if the values of this criterion are below 0.90, there is no issue with discriminant validity. Table 2 shows all the HTMT values below 0.90; there is no issue with

discriminant validity.

TABLE II
HTMT - MATRIX

	Heterotrait-monotrait ratio (HTMT)
CEP <-> CAM	0.459
PS <-> CAM	0.481
PS <-> CEP	0.506

The second criteria is "Fornell-Larcker"

The value of these criteria of Fornell-Larcker refers to the value of each factor should correlate with itself higher than with other factors (Fornell & Larcker, 1981) based on Table 3; each factor correlated with itself higher than with others as highlighted in bold font.

TABLE III
FORNELL-LARCKER CRITERION

	CAM	CEP	PS
CAM	0.826		
CEP	0.460	0.798	
PS	0.483	0.512	0.802

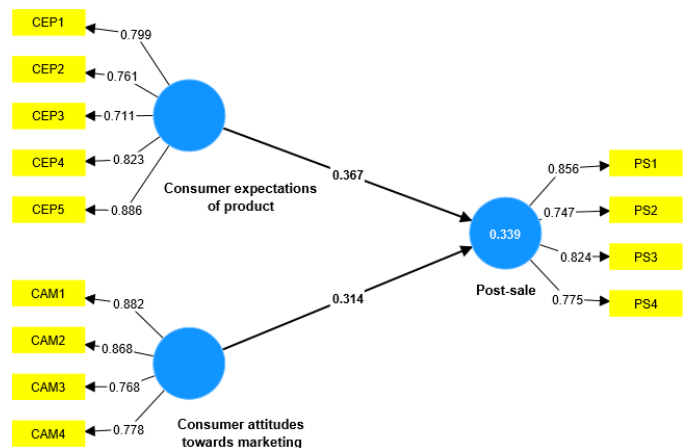


Fig. 2. Measurement Model

After conducting the measurement model, the structural model should run, which measures the main analysis of the study and the proposed hypotheses. This step runs with 5000 subsamples, as recommended by (Hair et al., 2019), to reduce the error.

The study consisted of three main hypotheses; based on Table 4 and Figure 3, the first and second proposed hypotheses are supported because the p-value <0.05 and the T-statistics >1.96; thus, consumer expectation of product and consumer attitude toward marketing has a significant impact on post-sale.

TABLE V
HYPOTHESES RESULTS

Hypotheses path	Sample mean	Standard deviation	T statistics	P values	Result
CAM -> Post Sale	0.315	0.090	3.472	0.001	Supported

CEP -> Post Sale	0.369	0.087	4.218	0.000	Supported
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CAM: Consumer expectation of product; CEP: Consumer attitudes toward marketing

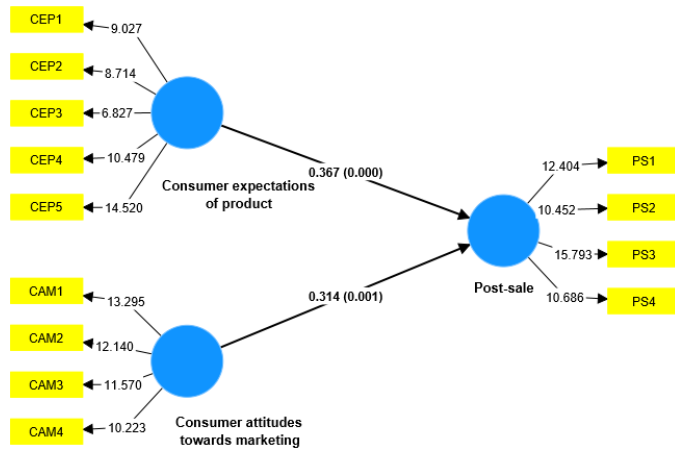


Fig.3. Structural Model

V. DISCUSSION

Based on the results reported in the previous section the product expectation able to improve the Post sale cognitive dissonance and the result reported has a positive and significant impact. This result supported by Wilkins et al., (2016) who reported similar result. This means the goods and services meeting the customer's expectations will reduce cognitive dissonance. When the seller provides clear information about the product before the sale, the customer will be able to know all the features and information to minimize the gap between what the customer expects and the reality. Reliable marketing supports positive pre-purchase expectations, achieving customer trust and, thus, customer confidence (del Bosque et al., 2006).

Attitude toward business reported has a significant impact on post-sale similar finding reported by Wilkins et al., (2016). The attitude toward organizational marketing is essential in brand perception and encourages purchasing decisions. The attitudes are impacted by several elements such as transparency, ethics and making strategy. The end user prefers clear marketing and avoids misleading information. However, clear marketing leads to a positive attitude and builds customers' trust. Meanwhile, deceptive marketing will lead to brand aversion. Thus, a positive attitude could improve customer loyalty, keep consumers loyal to the primary brand, and satisfy them, leading them to share their positive experiences with friends, family, and acquaintances. A positive attitude can also enhance customers' loyalty and keep them attached to the brand. The customer's attitude is essential to business success because a positive attitude leads to brand loyalty and improves the business. On the other hand, a negative attitude leads to minimal sales and business growth and loss of trust.

After purchase, customers' satisfaction plays an important role in deciding their behavior. On the other hand, when customers' expectations do not meet their expectations, this can lead to several negative post-sale attitudes and behaviors. Thus, the business' reputation and profitability could be damaged and

harmed when a visible negative post-sale exists. When the company understands the importance of behaviors, it will encourage the managers to implement several strategies to enhance the post-sale experiences.

VI. CONCLUSION

When the company intends customer retention, the company should resort to the post-sale activity, which will provide more priority short-term gain, which will lead to long-term trust. Customer loyalty is considered an essential asset for a company's success; deception marketing, such as price hidden and product misleading, leads to a decrease in customer trust and dissatisfaction and usually shows visible negative post-sale behaviors. Building a reliable relationship between the company and consumers requires business ethics and transparency, the priority of integrity in post-sale relations is that the business should not only sidestep the deception marketing but pay more attention to loyalty and keep the customers for a long time.

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