

Print ISSN: 2288-4637 / Online ISSN 2288-4645
doi:10.13106/jafeb.2022.vol9.no6.0207

The Effect of Deceptive Brand Image on Consumer Purchase Intention: Empirical Evidence from Iraqi Market

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Received: March 10, 2022 Revised: May 21, 2022 Accepted: May 30, 2022

Abstract

In recent years, the Iraqi market witnessed a large opening that resulted from the entry of many different products with an absence of government regulations. As a result, marketing deception practices have emerged as a new phenomenon. This study examines the effect of deceptive brand image on consumer purchase intention, with consumer attitude as a mediator. A quantitative method was applied in the form of a questionnaire distributed to shoppers at Carrefour Supermarket in Erbil, Kurdistan Region of Iraq. A random sampling technique was conducted. Subsequently, 200 questionnaires were distributed, and 175 valid questionnaires were analyzed, indicating an 87% response rate. Partial least squares structural equation modelling (PLS-SEM) has been utilized to test the hypothesis. The result showed that brand image deception has a negative impact on consumer purchasing intention. Also, attitude mediates the relationship between deceptive brand image and consumer purchase intention. The empirical finding confirms that deceptive marketing practices such as brand deception can change the attitude of consumers negatively toward brands and, therefore, affect the consumer purchase intentions. The findings suggest that honest brand marketing is beneficial in increasing the attitude toward the brand. This strategy will increase consumer purchase intentions.

Keywords: Marketing Deception, Brand Image Deception, Consumer Buying Behavior, Consumer Attitude, Theory of Planned Behavior

JEL Classification Code: M3, M30, M31, M37, M10

1. Introduction

The present-day business environment requires companies to spend a substantial amount of money on marketing purposes. The main drive of marketing is to attain loyal customers by influencing their feelings, knowledge, and purchasing behavior. Marketing is an essential activity that any business must perform. Executing an effective marketing strategy will lead to business success (Keller

& Kotler, 2016). In today's competitive environment, the marketing arena has been confronted with a dramatic change because of the impact of digital marketing and social media (Gaber et al., 2018). Despite the practicality of these new marketing tools, numerous businesses are applying unethical, deceptive practices that can damage the business in the long run.

Deceptive marketing practices have a negative influence on the relationship between businesses and consumers. According to Ray (2018), any business involves in deceptive marketing it isn't a trustworthy business since the new and existing customers may switch to another product or service. Therefore, the company will get a terrible status as a deceptive business, which means declining business in the future. This will also lead to the destruction of the brand image and reputation of every firm adopting these practices (Wilkins et al., 2016).

The influence of marketing deception on individual consumers is probably the worst feature of marketing. The customer will make unapprised and poor decisions about products and services if marketers and retailers didn't tell the truth about the brand (LaMarco, 2018). As a

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result, consumers will waste valuable time and money on a product that doesn't meet their needs and desire. Using such damaging techniques by marketers will have a negative effect in the long run.

The practice of marketing deception aims to earn profit in any way possible. Therefore, many companies are seeking to promote unhealthy products, especially in the Middle East (World Bank Report, 2019). Also, the division of the marketing process and the large number of parties involved in marketing created difficulty for researchers who try to investigate this problem. Thus, it was important to highlight the issue of marketing deception since marketing is one of the most prominent activities that organizations depend on for their success. Also, pushing regulatory authorities and consumers' protection societies to redouble their efforts to uncover such practices, and that detection and awareness of these practices fall in large part on the consumer. Of course, this is affected by many factors, including what concerns the consumer himself and some of the environment in which the consumer lives.

Marketing deception in Iraq is different from other countries due to the absence of governmental control, corruption, and the political composition and structure of the country (Lafta, 2016). According to Khalil (2019), the main causes for the spread of marketing deception in Iraq are weak faith and lack of commitment to the teachings of the true Islamic religion by many Iraqi marketers. Also, Assi and Wadi (2015) indicated staying away and not observing the ethical principles and rules in commercial transactions in particular, where greed and materialistic outlook have become dominant over the ethics of traders and business people. Assi & Wadi (2015) blamed the spread of deception on the absence of regulatory agencies and the weakness and ineffectiveness of consumer protection groups. Consumers' negativity regarding reporting fraud and deceit noticed, and demanding that the necessary measures be taken to compensate for the damage they suffered as a result of marketing deception (Taboush & Bokedron, 2017). Hence, the regulatory authorities in Iraq have a huge responsibility to protect consumers and monitor such products for the good of all Iraqi citizens.

Due to the above factors, deceptive marketing activities in Iraq will influence the Iraqi consumer purchase intention. Many Iraqi researchers such as Al-Bayati & Al-Rabaiwi (2019), Mohsen & Enad (2019), and Al-Heali (2020) addressed the influence of deception in marketing on consumer purchase decisions during sales as a marketing mix of deceptive elements which consist of price, product, promotion, and place.

In recent years, the Iraqi market witnessed a large opening resulting from the entry of many different products without government regulations. As a result, marketing deception practices have emerged as a new phenomenon (Gaber

et al., 2018). According to Lee & Jin (2019), the growth and intensity of this phenomenon created the existence of a well-established culture of marketing deception. However, in Iraq, the consumer protection laws fall short in addressing the problem of these unfair practices. This has caused consumers to suffer from deception and unethical practices. In addition, enormous damage was generated to Iraqi firms' financial performance, negatively affecting the companies' employees. The turnover of these firms is probably will increase because employees will exit (LaMarco, 2018).

These practices result in industry-wide damage (Jeong & Yoo, 2011; Huang & Lai, 2017; Hayder, 2017). Lafta (2016) indicated that many Iraqi marketers believe that the success of a business is linked to marketing deception practices; thus, it has become a very common practice, and the consumer will always be using fake/counterfeit products. This led the researchers to believe that focusing on Iraqi consumers' intention to purchase can be considered the most relevant variable in bringing more revenues to local entrepreneurs, also brightening the image of all Iraqi firms.

The core problem of the study focuses on the level at which customers are impacted by deceptive product images and what would be their future purchasing intention behavior, as well as the acceptance degree in terms of brand loyalty, repeat purchases, and location. The theoretical and practical gaps in this study indicate the scarcity of data when it comes to deceptive marketing practices and consumer intention to purchase; only a few studies, such as Arli et al. (2019) and Farah (2017), applied planned behavior in changing consumer intention. Also (Fu et al., 2019; Sun, 2019; Verstraten, 2015; Halkais et al., 2016; Hartono & Dewi, 2019) concluded that deceptive marketing has a negative effect on consumers' purchasing intention. In the Iraqi case, few researchers have written about marketing deception such as (Al Habash & Turkan, 2019 Al-Zyadat, 2017; Gaber et al., 2018; Bukhari et al., 2013; Arslan, 2014). These studies focused on deceptive marketing and its effect on loyalty. But the limited study has targeted the consumers' attitudes and purchase intentions of Iraqi consumers in regards to deceptive brand image during pre-sale activities.

The researchers were encouraged to study this subject because of the manifestation of deception in the entire country and the absence of governmental laws regarding consumer protection laws to curb deceptive practices (Lafta, 2015; Haefner et al., 2016; Duffett, 2015; Chiu & Leng, 2016; Chen, 2007). The evaluation of the previous literature showed that none of the previous studies had examined the relationship between the deceptive brand image and consumer attitude toward purchasing intention.

The purpose of this study is to measure the impact of deceptive brand image on the purchasing intention of Iraqi consumers with attitude as a mediator.

2. Literature Review and Hypotheses

According to Al-Heali (2020), deceptive marketing is a practice used by firms or sales personnel to distort or alter facts that affect the consumer's intention, resulting in improper purchasing decisions. Also, Al-Bayati & Al-Rabaiwi (2020) believe that deceptive marketing is an intentional act to hide the negativity of the product, fabricate qualities that do not exist in the product, or manipulate the way the product is presented to the customer.

2.1. Brand Image Advertising

Firms may well involve in a marketing campaign to create a business name or brand image (Aditya, 2001). For example, many car companies focus on safety features as their distinctive selling point. These claims are misleading if the automobile maker can't prove this claim with trusted and scientific evidence. Proof of car safety can consist of a demonstration of a drill or simulation to prove the claim. Other claims that their vehicle's performance is superior to their competition. These claims have to be verified and certified by independent agencies that socialized in cars to validate the claim.

The additional original practice is celebrity endorsement, such as sports superstars or movie stars (Okorie & Agbaleke, 2017). Celebrities consuming the products they advertise generally would not be deceptive; on the other hand, if the celebrity is getting paid for such advertisement, it is considered deceptive. Few specialists in marketing believe that celebrity endorsement causes no harm to consumers (Kusi et al., 2018). Yet, others view these practices as deception, and they should be eliminated. Massoudi & Fatah (2021) suggested that firms must apply novel marketing procedures instead of deceptive ones that focus on clients' needs or increase the degree of novelty of products or services. In a popular article by Aditya (2001), he asserted that fans of a popular actor purchased a brand used by the actor in a movie or film; this constitutes a deception. Thus, the actor and the brand producers are considered guilty of deceptive practices. This action will lead fans to switch to the brand used by their celebrity based on a false belief done mutually by the producer and the celebrity. Therefore, the celebrity will be paid a substantial amount of money for their advertising campaign, and the fans will spend their money on deceptive brands that will not meet their needs and wants. The view that no injury has happened on the condition that the shoppers are content with the brand does not provide an answer to the ethical query of whether deception has occurred or not.

2.2. Attitude

The theory of planned behavior suggests that the more satisfactory the attitude toward acquiring a proper product

free of deception or dishonesty, the more likely it will lead the customer to purchase this ethical product (Sun, 2019). According to Verstraten (2015), misleading information in advertisements may affect consumers' perception toward the information received, therefore will affect their attitudes towards the brand appearing in an ad or being advertised. A study by Chen (2007) investigated Taiwanese consumers' purchase intentions and attitudes toward organic foods. She discovered that the respondents' attitudes toward organic foods purchase were positively related to their attitude toward such types of food. Other studies such as (Darke & Ritchie, 2007; Riquelme & Román, 2014). Showed that the use of deceptive advertising tactics decreases the convincing influence of advertising and therefore leads to unproductive marketing communication.

The negative effects of deception shown above can result diminish repurchase intention. Even though the first evidence indicates that a consumer's feeling of being deceived leads to negative consequences for the marketer (Held & Germelmann, 2018), systematic research on the consequences of perceived deception on the intention to purchase is still scarce. Several studies have suggested an association between deceptive marketing and loyalty (Iqbal & Siddiqui, 2019), and misleading marketing and increased sales (Gaber et al., 2018). In addition, it misleads the consumers into buying products by adopting online tricky prices (Fu et al., 2018). However, no study has been done to investigate the deceptive brand with consumer purchasing intention with attitude toward deception as a moderator. The finding of this study, with the findings of existing research, can help with assessing consumers' reactions to deception.

2.3. Purchase Intention

In the process of purchasing, buying intention is considered the closing phase of purchasing, after numerous inducements of the consumer (Wijekoon & Sabri, 2021). Likewise, Takaya (2016) indicated that intention is also the final phase in online purchasing. Therefore, purchase intention acts as an important part of stimulating customer behavior. As per García et al. (2020), the purchase intention is defined as a situation between the buyer and the seller; this situation is activated when the purchaser is prepared to accept the offer from the seller. García et al. (2020) indicated that purchase intention is the desire of the consumer to buy a product or service subsequently, the consumer shows an intention to look for the certain benefit of this item and evaluate the product to see if it meets his expectation or satisfy his needs. Also, Kim (2020) defined purchase intention as a customer's propensity to do a specific act and serves as an essential indicator to foresee consumer behavior. In this article, the researchers define PI as the willingness of Customers' to purchase a product from a specific website

or store. Nonetheless, when a customer chooses a product, his final choice of acquiring the product will rest on his intention.

The process of PI is initiated when the customer evaluates the product. The customer uses his existing knowledge, experience, and external information in the evaluation process (Bukhari et al., 2013). Thus, outside influencers play an important part in buying intention process; these external factors can influence the attitudes of consumers. Overall, numerous issues affect the PI. According to Kim (2020), product quality, brand image, socioeconomics, and social influence and essential factors that influence the PI.

2.4. Hypothesis Development

2.4.1. Attitude and Consumer PI

The impact of attitude on PI is broadly researched and recognized. The connection between the attitude towards the behavior and the intention to execute the behavior is entrenched in the Theory of Reasoned Action and the Theory of Planned Behaviour. In their study, Chiu & Leng (2016) built a theoretical model on the TPB and inspected the association between TPB constructs: attitude, subjective norm, perceived behavioral control, and PI. The study was conducted in Singapore and Taiwan to explore the purchase intention in regard to fake sporting merchandise (Chiu & Leng, 2016). They concluded that attitude had the highest effect on the PI. Likewise, Haefner et al. (2016) indicated that attitude is the main variable when it comes to buying intention. Even though they introduced attitude and fondness exchangeable, the study hypotheses applied liking or product fondness; they contended that attitude is an alternative for liking (Haefner et al., 2016).

A study by Halkias et al. (2016) examined the connection between attitude and purchase intentions. Their study inspected the effect of local and international brand perception, capability, and warm attitude; the outcome showed that attitude does impact purchase intentions (Halkias et al., 2016). Similar findings by Jung & Seock (2016), explored the relationship between attitude and PI in the clothing industry, specifically, that attitude towards clothing brands has a significant effect on PI amongst American customers. Likewise, Mobrezi and Khoshtinat (2016) examined the attitude toward green products may impact the readiness to purchase green products. The study established that attitude undeniably impacts the willingness to purchase. As stated previously, buying intention and willingness to purchase have the same meaning, which is the real buying behavior. In this study, the researchers propose that attitude toward deceptive brand image has a positive influence on purchasing intention. Therefore, postulate the following hypothesis:

H1: Attitude toward deceptive image has a significant effect on purchase intention among Iraqi consumers.

2.4.2. Deceptive Brand Image and Consumer Purchase Intention

Incorporate marketing, image advertising act as a vital factor in business success and is realized by customers as a communication. It is information that can affect the image of the firm and similarly acts as a foundation for shoppers' buying intention. A study by Abdulbaqi (2020) concluded that deceitful and ambiguous information is unethical advertising which will negatively affect consumer buying intention, whereas word of mouth, as the researcher mentioned before, is negatively linked with consumer satisfaction. Najeeb & Hussain (2015) concluded also in their study that misleading advertising and deceptive information have an adverse effect on consumers' attitudes in relation to purchasing intention. Also, Hayder (2017) suggested that deceiving image advertising has a huge effect on customer purchasing behavior. From the above statements, the researchers postulate the following hypothesis:

H2: Deceptive brand image has a significant effect on purchase intention among Iraqi consumers.

2.4.3. Deceptive Brand Image and Attitude

Brand image is an association active in memory when one thinks of a certain brand (Hartono & Dewi, 2019). According to Arslan (2014), brand image can be understood as the awareness of the brand as mirrored by the brand families kept in customer memory. Therefore, marketers hype brand image through deception to generate a positive perception of a brand by customers. Firms consider deceiving consumers through personal character (Schellong et al., 2019). Accordingly, brands are recognized by customers based on consumers' personalities, and brands can change the personalities of the customers. Sun & Li (2016) claimed that brand personality can be labeled by customers or may describe the customers themselves; therefore, the customers will show a favorable behavior towards the brand. A study by Huang & Lai (2017) specified that the connection between brand personality and customer thought will be dissimilar because of variance in brand personality. In addition, Lee & Li (2018) indicated in their study that favorable brand personality will influence the consumers' behavior.

Other studies, such as Frank & Watchravesringkan (2016) concluded that together brand image and awareness significantly affect the creation of brand attitude. Also, Das (2015) concentrated on the impact of brand awareness on buying intentions. From the above notions, the researchers postulate the following hypothesis:

H3: Deceptive brand image has a significant effect on attitude toward the brand.

2.4.4. Attitude as a Mediator

Attitude is an individual's negative or positive emotional state regarding the performance of the objective behavior (Ashinze et al., 2021). Attitude is an important element of the TPB which indicates the evaluation of an individual's behavior as satisfactory or unsatisfactory (Amoako et al., 2020). Hamid & Bano (2021) stated that attitude has a vital role in the TPB, which measures an individual's behavior as satisfactory or not.

Najar & Hamid Rather (2021) confirmed a satisfactory connection between behavior and the consumers' intentions when purchasing energy-efficient home gear. Also, the attitude was positively related to consumers' energy reduction intentions (Ali et al., 2021; Mohsen & Enad, 2016; Mobrezi & Khoshtinat, 2016; Lee & Li, 2018; Khalil, 2019). In addition, attitude has a positive effect on consumers' intent to purchase renewable energy technology. Vo et al. (2022) stress the importance of a country's image and brand association in the intention to purchase a brand. A study by Nghiem-phu (2021) stated that attitude toward conserving cultural and natural resources could influence the intention to purchase by consumers. A study by Suki (2014) showed a significant relationship between product, attitude toward the product, and PI. They propose that when a product is extremely ethical, customers probably will have a positive attitude, thus a positive impact on their intentions. Another study by Nguyen et al. (2022) suggested that consumer ethnocentrism has an impact on Purchase intention. Suki (2014) established the consequence of marketing trustworthiness on attitude toward brand and purchase intentions. Therefore, the researchers can contend that attitude works as a mediator in the connection between the marketing deception practices and consumer PI. This indicates that deceptive marketing practices may impact purchase intention by their effect on attitude. The argument has established the likelihood of assigning the attitude as a mediator in clarifying the connection between a deceptive image in which it was represented and consumer PI. Hence, the researchers postulate the following two hypotheses:

H4: Attitude mediates the relationship between deceptive brand image and consumer purchase intention.

3. Research Methods and Materials

The influence of deceptive image on consumer purchase intention with attitude as mediator was examined. A quantitative method was applied in the form of a questionnaire distributed to shoppers at Carrefour Supermarket in Erbil, Kurdistan Region of Iraq. A random sampling technique was conducted. Subsequently, 200 questionnaires were distributed, and 175 valid questionnaires were analyzed, indicating an 87% response rate. The underpinning theory is the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB). The theory was modified to better interpret the theory compared to the original TBA (Taylor & Todd, 1995). Consequently, a different theoretical framework is created, as shown in Figure 1.

A pilot study was performed before the distribution of the questionnaire; a pilot test was conducted among 10 lecturers of marketing at Cihan University-Erbil. All questionnaires were positively collected. No changes were made to the questionnaires.

For measuring deceptive images, the researchers used a scale selected and adapted from Held & Gentleman (2018) measured by 7 statements. For attitude, a scale selected and taken from Wilkins et al. (2016) measured 5 statements. For purchase intention, a scale developed by Duffett (2015) was utilized and measured by 6 statements. A 5-point Likert scale was used to measure instruments.

To test the hypothesis, Partial least squares structural equation modeling (PLS-SEM) has been utilized in this study. It became a typical method for examining complicated inter-relationships between observed and latent variables. Academics and scholars appreciate the numerous benefits offered by PLS-SEM, such as the possibility to estimate very complex models and the method's flexibility in terms of data requirements and measurement specification (Hair et al., 2014).

3.1. Respondents' Demographic Profiles

The demographic variables in Table 1 showed that the majority of shoppers are women (60%), and shoppers ages 39–39 were the highest frequent shoppers (36.6%). The majority of shoppers have bachelor's degrees (42.8), and the majority of shoppers shop once a week (47.4).

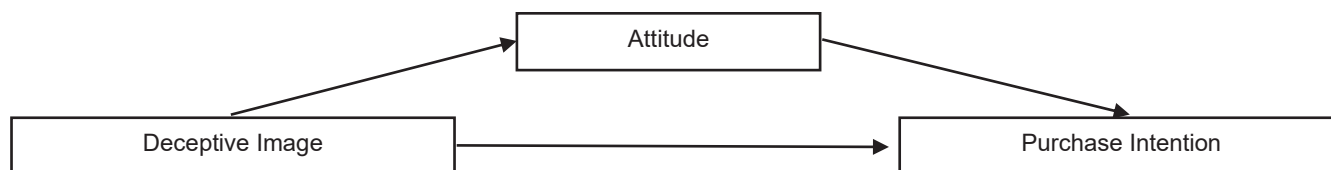


Figure 1: Theoretical Framework

Table 1: Respondents' Demographic Profiles (%)

		Frequency	Percent
Gender	Male	105	60.0
	Female	70	40.0
	Total	175	100.0
Age	18–29	52	29.7
	30–39	64	36.6
	40–49	31	17.7
	Above 50	28	16.0
	Total	175	100.0
Education	Elementary School	13	7.3
	High School Diploma	68	39.0
	Bachelor Degree	75	42.8
	Master Degree	17	9.7
	Ph.D. Degree	2	1.2
	Total	175	100.0
Frequency of Purchase	Once a week	83	47.4
	Every 2 weeks	48	27.4
	Every 3 weeks	19	10.9
	Every month	25	14.3
	Total	175	100.0

4. Results and Discussion

4.1. Measurement Model

The first step is to examine the outer loadings. According to (Hair et al., 2019), the loadings for each item should be 0.70 or greater based on Table 2 below all the items' loadings are exceeded 0.70 and were between (0.768 CPI3 and 0.932 ATT1) excepting ATT 1 and BBI 1 showed poor loading and less than 0.70 and has been removed.

The second step is to examine the internal consistency reliability. Usually, the reliability of the model measured by Composite Reliability (CR) and Cronbach's alpha (CA) both criteria cut off levels should be >0.70 (Hair et al., 2017). Table 2 also depicted CR, and CA reflected high internal consistency due to all the Constructs showing values higher than 0.70.

The third step is measuring each construct's Convergent Validity (CV), the CV measuring by the average variance extracted (AVE) for each construct. Additionally, the AVE should be 0.5 and higher (Hair et al., 2019); based on Table 2 all AVE constructs exceeded 0.5. thus, there is no issue with the model CV.

The fourth step is to measure discriminant validity which is the degree to which a variable in the structural model is empirically unique from other variables (Hair et al., 2019). This step is measuring by two criteria Fornell & Larcker (1981) and heterotrait-monotrait (HTMT). Based on the Fornell & Larcker (1981), each construct AVE should be correlated with itself higher than other constructs. Table 3 showed each construct correlated higher than the other, as highlighted in bold font in the Table below. Thus, there is no discriminant validity issue in this model.

Another criterion measuring the discriminant validity is HTMT. To ensure no discriminant issue, the HTMT for each construct should be lower than 0.90 (Hair et al., 2019). Table 4 illustrates all the constructs' values are lower than 0.90. second criteria of discriminant validity showed no issue. Thus, after ensuring there is no issue with validity reliability and convergent and discriminant validity for a proposed model, we can proceed to the next step, which is the structural model.

4.2. Structural Model

This stage is run by bootstrapping with 5000 subsamples as suggested by Hair, et al. (2017). are utilized to calculate the estimations' standard errors. The purpose of this step is to examine the proposed model hypotheses.

First should assess the coefficient of determination (R^2). The R^2 refers to measuring the variance of endogenous to exogenous. According to Chin (1998), the R^2 ranges are less than 0.19 unacceptable, between 0.19 to 0.33 considered weak, and from 0.33 to 0.67 considered moderate and above 0.67 high. Based on Table 5 below, the R^2 is 0.346 and 0.546 for attitude and consumer purchase intention respectively. Thus, the R^2 for this model is considered moderate. The second should assess the Q^2 the purpose of this step is to assess the predictive capability for the proposed model.

The Q^2 is run by the blindfolding step in Smart-PLS and this criteria value should be greater than zero (Hair et al., 2019). Based on Table XX the Q^2 is 0.324 for endogenous which is greater than zero. thus, this criterion has been achieved without issue.

The next is to measure the direct and indirect effect of the proposed model and examine the proposed hypotheses. Based on Table 6 and Figure 2.

The results indicated that attitude and DBI have a positive and significant impact on CPI with a P -value of $0.00 < 0.05$ and T -values of 5.625 and 10.659 > 1.96. Thus, H1 and H2 are supported.

Attitude is significantly impacted by DBI due to the p -value < 0.05 and the T -value of 9.811 > 1.96. Thus, H3 is supported.

Table 2: Construct Reliability and Validity

Constructs	Items	Outer Loadings	Cronbach's Alpha	Composite Reliability	AVE
Attitude	ATT1	0.932	0.905	0.938	0.819
	ATT3	0.909			
	ATT4	0.878			
	ATT5	0.907			
	ATT6	0.899			
CPI	CPI1	0.750	0.887	0.913	0.638
	CPI2	0.816			
	CPI3	0.747			
	CPI4	0.768			
	CPI5	0.863			
	CPI6	0.842			
DBI	DBI2	0.855	0.902	0.933	0.743
	DBI3	0.838			
	DBI4	0.871			
	DBI5	0.887			
	DBI6	0.859			
	DBI7	0.869			
	DBI8	0.854			

Table 3: Fornell and Larcker Criterion

	Attitude	CPI	DBI
Attitude	0.905		
CPI	0.674	0.799	
DBI	0.588	0.645	0.862

Table 4: Heterotrait-Monotrait Ratio (HTMT)

	Attitude	CPI	DBI
Attitude			
CPI	0.717		
DBI	0.622	0.689	

Table 5: R Square and Q2

	R Square	R Square Adjusted	Q ²
Attitude	0.346	0.342	0.270
CPI	0.549	0.543	0.324

The indirect effect path showed deceptive brand image has a positive and significant impact on consumer purchase intention through the mediating role of attitude with p -the value of $0.00 < 0.05$ and a t -value of $4.900 > 1.96$. Thus, H4 is supported.

4.3. Discussion

The aim of this study has been achieved since the data were analyzed and the results were shown above.

The first hypothesis examines the effect of attitude toward purchase intention among Iraqi consumers. The result showed that attitude has a significant impact on CPI. This outcome is in line with (Zaremohzzabieh et al., 2021; Ahmed Sallam & Algammash, 2016; Sheeraz et al., 2016; Charton-Vachet et al., 2020; Sun & Li, 2016; Taylor & Todd, 1995; Suki, 2014; Nguyen et al., 2022). Therefore, when it comes to deceptive images, attitude plays an essential role in the intention to purchase.

The second hypothesis has confirmed that deceptive brand image has a significant effect on purchase intention among Iraqi consumers. This outcome is also supported by prior studies such as (Abdulbaqi, 2020; Shen & Ahmad, 2022; Held & Germelman, 2018; Nghiem-Phu, 2021). This indicates that apparent brand characteristics play an essential part in clarifying consumers' purchase intention than other significant features such as production value and feature.

The third hypothesis that measured the effect of deceptive brand image on attitude toward the brand was confirmed, and the result was in line with Riley et al. (2015) and Jung & Seock (2016). This indicates that brand attitudes and purchase intentions are reduced and aggravates consumers' attitudes toward the brand.

Finally, the fourth hypothesis also supported that attitude mediates the relationship between deceptive brand image and consumer purchase intention. This result is in line with

Table 6: Total Effects

Proposed Path	Original Sample	Sample Mean	Standard Deviation	T Statistics	P Values	Decision
Attitude → CPI	0.450	0.450	0.080	5.625	0.000	Supported
DBI → CPI	0.645	0.647	0.061	10.659	0.000	Supported
DBI → Attitude	0.588	0.587	0.060	9.811	0.000	Supported
Specific Indirect Effects						
DBI → Attitude → CPI	0.265	0.264	0.054	4.900	0.000	Supported

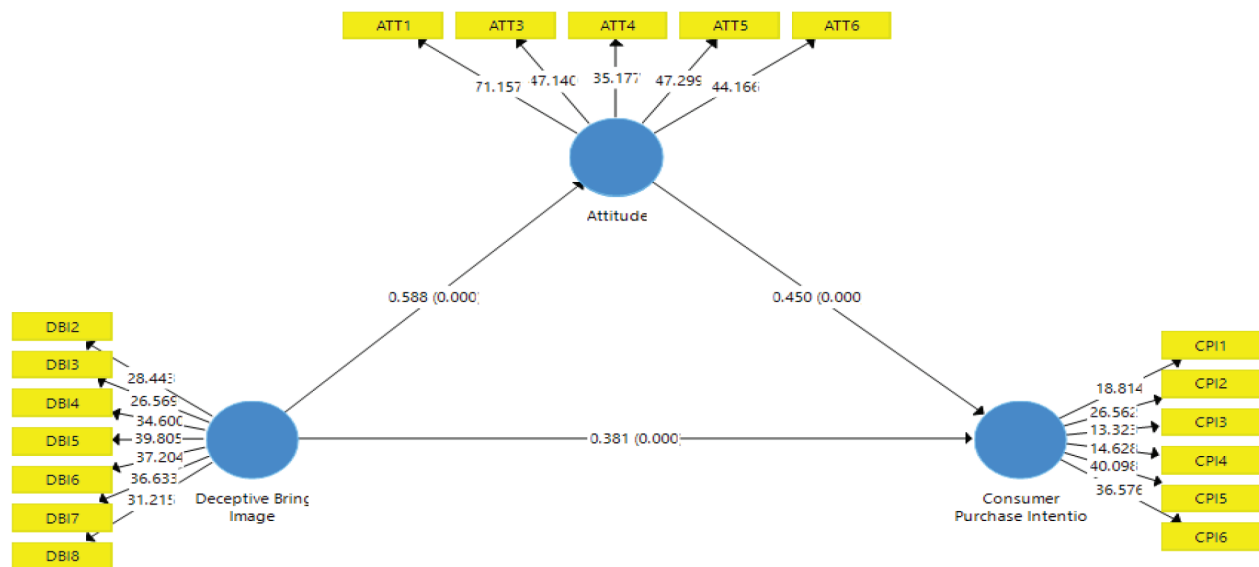


Figure 2: Hypothesized Model

Sheeraz et al. (2016). This indicates that brand deception changes consumer attitude, and in turn, attitude affects consumers’ purchase intentions.

5. Conclusion and Implications

The current study connects the significance of deceptive brand image and attitudes toward brands in the Iraqi market. The empirical finding confirms that deceptive marketing practices such as brand deception can change the attitude of consumers negatively toward brands, therefore, affecting the consumer purchase intentions. The findings suggest that honest brand marketing is very useful in increasing the attitude toward the brand. This strategy will increase consumer purchase intentions. Hence, marketers and retailers must concentrate on ethical brand building to generate more business.

Although the first evidence indicates that a consumer’s feeling of being deceived leads to negative consequences for

the marketer, organized research on the impact of deceptive marketing on consumer purchasing intention is still scarce. To our knowledge, there are very few studies that give an efficient overview of the significance of deceptive marketing on Iraqi consumers, associate results across studies, and help sellers to become aware of the cost associated with deceptive marketing. This study closes the gap in the literature by providing an inclusive explanation of deceptive brand image impacts on customer attitudes toward deception and consumer purchasing decisions after being deceived.

From a practical standpoint, this article will better-educate consumers on how to make wise decisions when responding to image advertising. Also, to be able to distinguish between false claims and unethical practices. In addition, a better understanding of when perceived deception occurs enables marketers to avoid objectively unjustified consumers’ accusations of deception. Those unjustified accusations can be read by other consumers and, therefore, may have negative consequences for a marketer who behaves

unethically. Furthermore, knowing more about the negative consequences of perceived deception could potentially lead marketers to engage less in unethical behavior. Additionally, this article gives policymakers a point of view to give recommendations that are in balance with the consumers' and marketers' need for protection from deception.

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